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A history of the understanding of the miraculous in the Judaeo-Christian tradition with particular reference to the understanding of the miraculous in the principal fathers of the East and West and to the words used to refer to the miraculous

## Thesis

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A HISTORY OF THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE MIRACULOUS  
IN THE JUDAEAN - CHRISTIAN TRADITION WITH PARTI-  
CULAR REFERENCE TO THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE MIR-  
ACULOUS IN THE PRINCIPAL FATHERS OF THE EAST AND  
WEST AND TO THE WORDS USED TO REFER TO THE MIRA-  
CULOUS.

The Rev. D.W.Dale.

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## RESUME

In chapter 1 of this study the understanding of the miraculous in the Old Testament is examined as a) God's guidance of his - tory and the ordinary events of life and b) as God's activity in times of intensified revelation; events which might be distinguished as ' miracles '. The understanding of the miraculous in the Wisdom literature and the function of the prophet as a wonder worker are also examined. In chapter 2 the development of the doctrine of creation ' ex nihilo ' is examined.

The understanding of the miraculous in the Synoptic tradition, with a detailed study of the words used to refer to the miraculous in this tradition, is examined in chapter 3. The understanding of the miraculous in St John's gospel is examined in chapter 4 and the remainder of the New Testament is examined in chapter 5. The understanding of the miracle of the Virgin Birth in the New Testament and the Fathers is examined in chapter 6 together with the understanding of the miracle of the Resurrection of Jesus in the Synoptic tradition and in St John. The Pauline understanding of the Resurrection of Jesus and of the risen body is examined in chapter 7. In chapter 8 the understanding of the Resurrection of Jesus, the resurrection of all men and the nature of the risen body in the apocryphal literature of the early Church and in the Fathers of the East and West is examined.

The understanding of the miraculous from the Apostolic Fathers to Augustine of Hippo is examined in chapter 9. The miracles referred to in Gregory of Nyssa's life of Gregory Thaumaturgus, the History of the Egyptian Monks by Rufinus and the Life of Apollonius of Tyana by Philostratus are examined in chapter 10. Appendix A examines the words used by the Greek Fathers to refer to the miraculous and the words so used in the Latin Fathers are examined in Appendix B. Hebrew words so used are examined in Appendix C.

## Introduction

This introduction sets out to answer two questions; 'What is the purpose of the study?' and 'What was the method used in this study?' The first question is the easier. The purpose of the study is to examine the history of the way in which miracles were understood during this period with some consideration of the language used to refer to miracles with particular reference to the Fathers of the East and West. Such a study places the patristic understanding of the miraculous in an historical context and enables us to assess the one characteristic of the early writings of the Church which is most difficult for many 20th century men to accept as a real and significant element in their religious experience, the belief in and experience of miracles. Only by a close study of their understanding of the miraculous can we penetrate beyond the miracle - filled hagiographies to what may be a more comprehensible picture of this aspect of patristic theology. Some of the hagiographies seem almost pagan in their delight with spectacular and incredible wonders. What sense did the profound theologians of the first four centuries of the Church's life make of these stories? Did their understanding of the miraculous have a place for these stories?

The likelihood that the understandings of the Old and New Testament affected the patristic understanding makes it necessary to study the biblical understanding of the miraculous.

There has been no historical study of the miraculous since Grant's "Miracle and Natural Law in Graeco - Roman and Early Christian Thought" of 1952. This work examined the understanding of the miraculous in the period studied here and provides an account of the various writings on the subject without, however, giving an indication of the theological significance of the experiences which gave rise to the records. This deficiency limits the value of his work omitting, as it does, consideration of the central characteristic of the miraculous that is that it is a theological issue. His account of the understanding of the miraculous is therefore incomplete. This becomes particularly clear in his examination of the Resurrection of Jesus. While examining this central miracle of the New Testament he omits full consideration of the eschatological significance of the Resurrection or of the Pauline understanding of the Resurrection which formed the basis of the most profound theology of the Resurr-

ection which we find in the Greek Fathers and particularly Origen.

There are, of course, treatments of the miraculous in most theologies of the Old and New Testament and reference is made to many of these works in the examination of the biblical understanding of the miraculous. There is, however, no work which seeks to give an account of the history of the understanding of the miraculous while giving full weight to the theological significance of the miraculous.

Since the central miracle of the Christian era is the Resurrection of Jesus this miracle has been studied in considerable detail with an examination of how it was understood in the New Testament and the Fathers. Particular attention has been given to the Pauline narratives concerning the Resurrection and the problems which these raise especially the problem of the relationship between the Pauline experience of the Resurrection of Jesus and the Synoptic records.

Two articles in "Miracles"<sup>1</sup> edited by C.F.D.Moule deal with the apologetic use of miracles in the early Church and the understanding of miracles in the early Church. They are by Lampe and Wiles respectively. Lampe's article is restricted to the bounds defined by its title and does not seek to deal with the miraculous except as an apologetic weapon. This study seeks to examine in greater detail the difficulties caused by the apologetic use of miracles and the way in which the Church sought to distinguish between magic and miracle. Wiles' article deals with miracles in the thought of the Church up to the time of Augustine. This study seeks to examine the place of miracles in the Church's thought in greater detail with an investigation of the evidence for the absence of the miraculous from the experience of many Christians in the 4th and 5th centuries, the way in which this was understood, the continuing belief in contemporary miracles, the growth of spectacular hagiography and the relationship of the miraculous to nature.

Because the words used to describe things are important indications of the way those things were understood both the main body of this study and the appendixes deal extensively with the words used to refer to the miraculous in Hebrew, Greek and Latin in the Old and New Testament and in the Greek and Latin Fathers. The appendixes are both evidence for some of the conclusions arrived at in the main text and also,

it is hoped, resources for those who wish to explore further the patristic

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1. Moule Miracles, arts' Miracles and Early Christian Apologetic' G.W.H.Lampe  
' Miracles in the Early Church' M.F.Wiles

understanding of the miraculous.

When seeking to discover the understanding of the miraculous in a past age several problems have to be solved. They are problems of definition and methodology. How do we decide what was thought to be miraculous and how do we decide which material to study? We cannot use our own understanding of the miraculous as a basis for answering these questions. To do so is to defeat the purpose of the exercise. The reasons are obvious. A reading of almost any biblical or patristic text makes it clear that there are substantial differences between most modern world views and the various world views of the biblical and patristic eras and such differences clearly lead to different understandings of what is miraculous. A modern understanding is, therefore, no guide to earlier understandings and if there were no differences there would be no point in examining earlier understandings. When the period under examination covers many centuries then the problems of methodology and definition become more complex.

The large number of words which refer to the miraculous throughout the period point to the wide variety of understandings in the period as does the fact that at no time in this period is a single word in Latin, Greek or Hebrew used exclusively in this way. There are always at least two words with different meanings so used.<sup>1</sup> The difficulty of definition is a longstanding one for it is not until Augustine that we find a definition of 'miracle'.<sup>2</sup> His definition is, at first sight, so comprehensive as to be useless including as it does every wonderful event with an unknown cause. We shall see how Augustine distinguished between the causes of various types of wonderful event. Ways of distinguishing between wonderful events the cause of which lies immediately or mediately with God and false miracles i.e. wonderful events the cause of which is not God, were never systematically set out by the Fathers but it is possible to develop a list of the criteria which are used from their writings.<sup>3</sup> A further theoretical differentiation needs to be made between events which can be called intrinsically wonderful, that is are wonder producing in themselves and would be considered so by any observer, and events which are wonder - producing because they are perceived as revelatory but would not be regarded as so by an objective observer. The dist -

1. p.41 ff. below

2. p.251 ff. below

3. p.203 f. below.

inction is theoretical because while some events recorded as being wonderful may fall the second class of event we cannot in most cases tell from the accounts of these events that are perceived to be revelatory whether they are wonderful because they are so perceived or are so perceived because they are wonderful; '.....and they were all amazed.'<sup>1</sup> One of the few accounts of an unremarkable event which carries with it the revelation of God is the almond branch of Jeremiah 1.11 ff.<sup>2</sup>

If we begin with the English word 'Miracle' from the Latin word 'miraculum' we can say that the basic understanding of a miracle is that it caused wonder and that within that definition there is a narrower definition of a wonder - producing event the cause of which is God and which is for this reason revelatory. The revelatory quality of the event is what distinguishes it as an act of God. An event which bore no revelation was not therefore a miracle in the Judaeo - Christian tradition. Two problems arose. Firstly some wonderful events were mistakenly believed to be revelatory and secondly it was believed that devils could work wonders that might delude.

We can have, therefore, accounts of three kinds of event; a) those events which are intrinsically wonderful but which were not believed to be revelatory; b) those events which are intrinsically wonderful and are for this reason believed to be revelatory; and c) those events which are perceived as revelatory and are therefore considered wonderful.

The words used do not help us to distinguish between the different types of event. A brief study of the two Greek words *δύναμις* and *τέρας* illustrates the problem clearly. *δύναμις* is one of two words in the Synoptic Tradition which refer to miracles; i.e. revelatory acts of God. *τέρας* is never used in this way in the Synoptic Gospels and only in a very limited way in Acts. Its basic meaning is an intrinsically wonderful act. *δύναμις* is used to translate some 35 Hebrew words in the LXX,<sup>3</sup> words with different meanings and emphases. These examples illustrate the point:

$\text{לְיָדָם}$  - strength or an army or mighty men. Zech 4.6., 1 Kings 20.25.  
 $\text{צְבָאָה}$  - an army. e.g. Is. 40.2., Num. 31.53.  
 $\text{עֹז}$  - strength or power. e.g. Job 12.16.  
 $\text{גִּבּוֹרָה}$  - power and courage and so acts of power and courage and when acts of God, miracles. Deut. 3.24.

*δύναμις* frequently refers to miracles in the Synoptic Gospels but much less

1. e.g. Mk. 1.27, 2.12., 7.37.

2. cf. Is. 8.18, Ez. 24.24.

3. Abbott - Smith art. '

frequently in the Greek fathers.<sup>1</sup> It is translated by virtus in the Vulgate and this word, similarly, is only frequently used in the Latin fathers in this sense.<sup>2</sup>

In the use of  $\tau\epsilon\rho\alpha\varsigma$  the process is reversed.  $\tau\epsilon\rho\alpha\varsigma$  means a wonderful event. The only Hebrew word consistently translated by  $\tau\epsilon\rho\alpha\varsigma$  in the LXX is  $\text{תִּפְתֹּחַ}$ . While  $\text{תִּפְתֹּחַ}$  refers sometimes to wonderful events e.g. Exodus 4.21., it also refers to revelatory events which are not intrinsically wonderful e.g. the naming of Isaiah's children<sup>3</sup> and the death of Ezekiel's wife.<sup>4</sup> These events are in every way similar to the reflection on the meaning of an almond branch that we find in Jeremiah. The word in Jeremiah is however  $\text{תִּיָּא}$  which means a sign and is translated as  $\sigma\eta\mu\epsilon\iota\omicron\nu$  in the LXX which is with  $\epsilon\rho\gamma\omicron\nu$  and  $\delta\upsilon\nu\alpha\mu\iota\varsigma$  one of the three New Testament words used for miracles. It is not widely used in the Greek fathers<sup>5</sup> with this meaning nor is signum by which it is consistently translated in the LXX widely used in the Latin fathers to refer to miracles.<sup>6</sup> The nature of the problem becomes even more obvious when we observe that  $\tau\epsilon\rho\alpha\varsigma$ , translated by prodigium in the Vulgate, which is never used to refer to miracles in the Gospels and only infrequently in Acts, is widely used, with its derivatives, to refer to miracles in the Greek fathers<sup>7</sup> as prodigium is in the Latin fathers.<sup>8</sup>

$\delta\upsilon\nu\alpha\mu\iota\varsigma$ ,  $\sigma\eta\mu\epsilon\iota\omicron\nu$  and  $\epsilon\rho\gamma\omicron\nu$  the New Testament words for the miraculous are not principally used to refer to miraculous events outside the New Testament and have non-miraculous uses which are more common.<sup>9</sup> On the basis of the words alone we may understand an event to be miraculous when it was not understood to be so by the writer. We may also, if we are only guided by the words used, miss the use of a word such as in a miraculous reference.

The method we have adopted here is the following; we have examined the principal reports in the literature which use words which may indicate that the event was believed to be revelatory, or wonderful in some way or which from the context and contents of the passage indicate that a revelation is believed to have occurred or that something wonderful has happened. We have examined the ways in which these events were understood and the way in which true miracles i.e. events believed to be a revelation of God, and false miracles i.e. events the agent of which is not God and which are therefore not revelatory were distinguished. Gregory of Nyssa's Life of Gregory Thaumaturgus,<sup>10</sup> the Life of Apollonius of Tyana by Philostratus<sup>11</sup>

1.283 below.

2.299 below.

3.Is.8.18.

4.Ez.24.24.

5.p.284 below.

6.p.300 below.

7.p.287 below.

8.p.302 below

9. pp.283,284,288 below.

10.p.257 ff.below.

11.p.262 ff.below.

and the History of the Egyptian Monks by Rufinus<sup>1</sup> is also examined.

We have restricted our examination to a period which finishes with Augustine of Hippo after which we enter a period when the integrity on the understanding of the miraculous breaks down. We find in popular hagiography reports of miracles without the parallel development of a theology of the miraculous which can find a place for these reports. As in so many other areas of theological study Augustine seems to mark the end of a period and it is convenient to finish our study with him. To proceed to is encounter a series of new considerations the examination of which would render the present study too long.

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1.p.268 ff. below.



The Understanding of the Miraculous in the Old Testament.

'... the characteristic of all Israel's contemplation of history is that it was a direct expression of her faith ... For in one way or another they were all miracle stories.'<sup>1</sup> Von Rad's comment upon the Jewish understanding of history states clearly the basis of Israel's understanding of the miraculous. The Hebrew experience was one of 'continuous miracle'.<sup>2</sup> It is not correct, however, to take the next step in the argument and suggest with J.P. Ross<sup>3</sup> that the conception of miracle was unknown to the Hebrew because there was no contrast between miracle and natural law. This is to import a modern understanding of miracle into the Hebrew understanding of the miraculous. It is correct that the miraculous was not a breach of the natural law for the Hebrew had no conception of natural law as a self contained system of causation distinct from and independent of God's activity, at least until the book of Wisdom and not consistently there.<sup>4</sup> This does not mean that there was no conception of the miraculous however. The miraculous was for them that event which revealed God and such events could be distinguished from normal events by their revelatory character although there are episodes when the hand of God is perceived at every step in such matters as the finding of a bride, for example.<sup>5</sup> They distinguished between the times of intensified revelation, those events that could be called miracles, and the general run of events, by the use of the words examined below and in Appendix C.

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1. Von Rad Old Testament 1. p.50

2. Koehler Hebrew Man p.134

3. Ross 'Some notes on miracle in the Old Testament' in Miracles ed. Moule p.45

4. Wisdom 7.17ff.

5. Genesis 24.1 - 56 and see p.13ff. below.

With variations of emphasis through the course of her history and with a decreasing awareness of the miraculous in the Wisdom literature the fundamental understanding of the miraculous in the Old Testament is that God acts in every event in history. The purpose of history was God's purpose and he acted in history to bring his people to the destiny for which he created them. He is the cause of victory and defeat, of illness and health and of good harvest and bad harvest and in all these he acts to bring his people to obedience. The ubiquitousness of God's present activity is demonstrated both directly in the narratives and by the wide variety of words which is used to describe those times of intensified revelation emerging as extraordinary phenomena.

When a secularised view of history begins to develop and where the record is of secular political history with secular cause and effect, as for example in the narratives of David's succession, God is understood to move right into the chain of secular events and to act within the lives of his people.<sup>2</sup> Even when the miracles cease and when interest in the great works of God flags, as in the Wisdom literature, then the great miracle of creation is still the subject of Israel's religious contemplation. (See below the note on the development of the doctrine of creation 'ex nihilo' in Jewish and early Christian thought.)<sup>3</sup> But even here when Israel came nearest to believing in an order of nature independent of the action of God there is never any doubt that God's action will be found when it is looked for.

The understanding of the miraculous in the Old Testament will be examined in three broad categories :-

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1. Von Rad Old Testament 1.pp.51 f. & 315. Jacob Old Testament p.194 f.
  2. See p.15 below. 3. See p.33 f. below.

- 1) as God's immediate, recognised and general guidance of history, nature and the ordinary events of life;
- 2) as extraordinary and spectacular events, times of intensified revelation; and
- 3) as God's remote power shown in the miracle of creation against which the Wisdom writers develop their philosophy, reflect upon the problems of life and dispense generalised moral advice.

Two further preliminary notes are necessary.

First, these three categories are not exclusive nor does the understanding of the miraculous which they contain appear exclusively in any particular text. The first two ways in which the miraculous is understood intermingle throughout the Old Testament with varying emphases in different passages. The understanding of the miraculous which emerges in the Wisdom books is set within the context of the earlier understandings even if these are remote from the experience and concern of the writers.

Secondly, the translation generally used throughout this study is the Jerusalem Bible. Any exceptions are noted. The Jerusalem Bible gives two translations of the name of God. 'Yahweh' when that is used in the Hebrew and 'God' for the other names used. This raises the question of differing understandings of the miraculous in the Yahwist, Elohist, Priestly and Deuteronomic (J, E, P and D)<sup>1</sup> writers. No separate detailed examination of this question is made. Although the Yahwist looks to the Exodus as the primary miracle of Israel's experience and the Priestly writer looks further back to the Creation, the basic understanding of the miraculous seems to be common to all four writers. Any small differences of emphasis are not significant

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<sup>1</sup> D, E, J and P are the symbols used since Wellhausen ( 1844 - 1918 ) to refer to the principal sources of the Pentateuch, D being the source of almost all Deuteronomy, E and J being the sources of the Patriarchal and Exodus narratives being distinguished by the use of *elohim* ( אֱלֹהִים ) and *Jahweh* ( יהוה ) respectively to refer to God. J is also to be found in Genesis 2.4. ff. P is believed to be the source of Genesis 1.1 - 2.3., Exodus 25 - 40, Leviticus and much of Numbers.

for the examination of the later understanding of the miraculous in the New Testament and the Patristic period. Dates of sources and Old Testament authors are taken from the Jerusalem Bible prefaces or from Oesterley and Robinson, Old Testament.

1) The miraculous understood as God's immediate, recognised and general guidance of history, nature and the ordinary events of life.

Every event in the history of Israel, except during the period of the Wisdom literature, was seen as the work of God, part of his continuous activity to bring Israel to the fulfilment of its vocation as his people. When natural blessings are withheld they are withheld because of Israel's disobedience.

' Because while my house lies in ruins  
You are busy with your own, each one of you.  
That is why the sky has withheld the rain  
And the earth withheld its yield.  
I have called down drought on land and hills,  
On wheat, on new wine,  
On oil and on all the produce of the ground,  
On man and beast and on all their labours. '  
Haggai 1. 9b - 10.520 B.C.

Political defeat, like a bad drought, is God's action in history to punish his disobedient people.

' Did not I, who brought Israel out of the land of Egypt,  
Bring the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Aramaeans  
From Kir?

Now, my eyes are turned on the sinful kingdom,  
To wipe it off the face of the earth. '

Amos 9. 7b-8a. c 760 B.C.

As the vision of history grows grander God is seen acting in the  
lives of kings of great nations.

' Thus says Yahweh to his anointed, to Cyrus, '

(The only Old Testament passage in which 'messiah' refers to a  
non-Israelite.)<sup>1</sup>

Isaiah 45. 1. Towards the end of the Exile, 539 B.C.

The whole universe and all history is the miracle of God's  
presence and activity.

' It is he who made the Pleiades and Orion,  
Who turns the dusk to dawn  
And day to darkest night.  
He summons the waters of the sea  
And pours them over the land. '  
Amos 5. 8.

This broad and exalted understanding of the miraculous in which  
God shapes the destinies of nations and guides his people by the working  
of nature and of history is the natural understanding for a nation whose  
very existence finds its beginning in God's mighty act of election when  
he brought Israel out of Egypt. Until their election by God the people  
who later become Israel were almost certainly part of the slave populat-  
ion of 'Apiru' that is recorded as being in Egypt before and during the

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1. Oxford Annotated Revised Standard  
Version 1962 p.878.

reign of Ramesses II ( 1290 - 1224 B.C. ) and who swore by the 'gods of the Apiru', an expression that parallels exactly the 'God of the Hebrews' found in Exodus 3.18, 5.3, 7.16.

The very existence of Israel, therefore, begins not in the development of a racial or tribal group but in God's concrete redemptive activity by which he creates for himself a nation from the slave population of Egypt. Until the relatively late development of the doctrine of creation 'ex nihilo' it is this event which is the fundamental miracle of Israel's experience, which indeed creates the possibility of an experience of God for these people.

As Israel matures as a people and creates for herself a pre-Egyptian history and finds in the patriarchal history an identity which goes back to the election of Abraham of Ur of the Chaldees the nation develops its understanding of the miraculous so that even the story of finding a bride for Isaac becomes a narrative of God's action not merely in the guiding of history but also in the details of a wooing which lies at a key point in the development of that history. The narrative of Genesis 24 which contains the account of the wooing demonstrates this development in the understanding of the miraculous most clearly.

Abraham commissions his servant to go to his home-land to find a bride for his son. The servant asks what he is to do if the woman he selects refuses to come with him. Abraham refers to the instruction

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1. Bright Israel pp.95 & 151. Although it is not explicitly stated in the O.T. narrative, the centrality of the Exodus in Israel's early theology, the earliness of the Exodus narrative ( Von Rad O.T. 1. p.356) and the lateness of the pre - Exodus narrative indicate that the origin of Israel is in God's redemptive act in the Exodus rather than in the history of Abraham and his successors. Bright Israel p.122., Von Rad O.T. 1. pp.175, 177 n.3.

he has received from God and says that he will release his servant from his oath if the woman will not follow him.

'Yahweh, God of heaven and God of earth, took me from my father's home, and from the land of my kinsfolk, and he swore that he would give this country to my descendents. He will now send his angel ahead of you, so that you may choose a wife for my son there. And if the woman does not want to come back with you, you will be free from this oath of mine.' Genesis 24. 6-7.

As the servant comes near to Nahor's town and waits for the woman to come to the well he prays for the sign that will guide him.

'Yahweh, God of my master Abraham, be with me today, and show your kindness to my master Abraham. Here I stand by the spring as the young women from the town come out to draw water ... If she answers, "Drink, and I will water your camels too", may she be the one you have chosen for your servant Isaac;' Verses 12-14, repeated in verses 42-44.

The sign is given. The girl gives the reply asked for in verses 17 and 18. The servant waits to see if his prayer has been answered.

' .... while the man watched in silence, wondering whether Yahweh had made his journey successful or not.' Verse 21.

' Then the man bowed down and worshipped Yahweh saying, "Blessed be Yahweh, God of my master Abraham, for he has not stopped showing goodness and kindness to my master. Yahweh has guided my steps to the house of my master's brother." ' Verse 27.

He is greeted by Rebekah's brother Laban as a man who comes under God's guidance.

' Come in, blessed of Yahweh ... ' Verse 31.

In his account of his journey from Abraham he relates the details of his prayer for guidance and his response to the sign; verses 42-44, 48.

This convinces Laban and Bethuel that the whole matter is designed by God.

' "This is from Yahweh; it is not in our power to say yes or no to you ... Take her and go; ... as Yahweh has decreed." ' Verses 50-52.

The servant responds with thanks to Yahweh and hurries to return to Abraham for the journey is God's journey and there must be no delay.

' On hearing this Abraham's servant prostrated himself on the ground before Yahweh .... "Do not delay me; it is Yahweh who has made my journey successful;" ' Verses 52 and 56.

At this point the narrative continues naturally with the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah and provides, whether purposely or by chance, a sharp contrast to the earlier part of the narrative in which the action of God is constantly acknowledged as present in every phase. The early part of the narrative demonstrates with great clarity the way in which the writer, the Yahwist, expresses Israel's understanding of the miraculous as God's immediate and acknowledged presence guiding each event. The whole episode is a miracle story of God acting in the guidance of individual lives, lives which are the beginning, or are seen by the nation that God creates at the Exodus as the beginning, of the process by which God calls Israel to be his people.

A similar understanding of the miraculous emerges in what is, to all intents and purposes, the account of the struggle for political control following the death of Gideon. At the critical points in the development of the situation God is understood to be active. The author, if not the Deuteronomist, writes under the Deuteronomic influence in a Deuteronomic tone and style.

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1. Oesterley and Robinson Old Testament  
pp.177 ff.



Abimelech usurps the kingship of Israel and in the subsequent dispute with his brother Jotham the men of Shechem desert him. The desertion is the work of God.

' Then God sent a spirit of discord between Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem and the leaders of Shechem rebelled against Abimelech.'  
Judges 9. 23.

Abimelech's subsequent death as a woman throws a millstone from a tower he is besieging is God's punishment for having killed his father's family.

' Thus God made the evil recoil on Abimelech that he had done to his father by murdering his seventy brothers.'

As indeed the men of Shechem are also punished.

' ... as God made all the wickedness of the people of Shechem recoil on their heads too. '

Their punishment being the fulfillment of the curse of Jotham.

' ... and so the curse of Jotham, son of Jerubbaal came true for them. ' Judges 9. 56-57.

The guidance of Israel is, therefore, not only in personal events as in the wooing of Rebekah but also in political events such as these. This is never more clear than in the description of David's path to the throne of Israel and especially as his succession to Saul comes nearer. God acts at every point as Saul pursues David. It is the Lord who puts Saul and his men to sleep as they pursue David and so gives David the opportunity to demonstrate his loyalty to Saul and his reverence for the Lord's anointed king.

' No one saw, no one knew, no one woke up; they were all asleep, for a deep sleep from Yahweh had fallen on them. ' I Samuel 26. 12.

David appeals to Saul to consider the source of his hatred of him. In doing so he reveals his belief in God's intimate guidance of affairs.

' ... if Yahweh himself has incited you against me, let him accept an offering; but if men have done it, may they be accursed before Yahweh, for they have driven me out so that I have no share in the heritage of Yahweh. ' I Samuel 26. 19.

For David the whole episode is the work of God and he has responded to each part of the event as to a direct encounter with God.

' Yahweh repays everyone for his uprightness and loyalty. Today Yahweh has put you in my power, but I would not raise my hand against Yahweh's anointed. Just as today your life has counted for much in my eyes, so shall my life count for much in the sight of Yahweh and he will deliver me from all distress. ' I Samuel 26. 23-24.

The action of God was revealed at every point and so 'they were all miracle stories', stories which tell of events in which the revelation of God was perceived. It is against this background of God's direction both of nature and history and in the details of people's lives that the moments of more intense revelation occur. These are the events which cause wonder and surprise and which might more commonly be called miracles.

## 2. The miraculous understood as wonder-producing events; times of intensified revelation.

God also acted in events which caused wonder. There is no one special kind of event in which God acts and there is no one common understanding of these events. It is important constantly to recall

that for Israel nothing was impossible to God and while, for example, a modern man will see such an event as the stopping of the sun by Joshua in Joshua 10. 12 as due to the literal interpretation of poetic language, no such rationalisation was used in Israel. Nor need the event be intrinsically a cause of amazement or wonder. As will be mentioned below an almond tree <sup>2</sup> can be a miracle. The rich variety of events which are regarded as miracles is demonstrated by the large number of words used to describe them and this variety is a natural extension of the ubiquitousness of God's activity in guiding the everyday lives of his people. If he is present in the ways examined above then the times of intensified revelation will reflect this variety of action.

The understanding of the times of intensified revelation, which is shown in the words used to describe them, is of events which are either manifestations of God's power and nature and therefore revelatory or events that are revelatory signs without being intrinsically wonderful.

Perhaps the most fundamental understanding is that an act of God is a creation,  $\text{נִחַדְתִּי}$ , part of his creative activity. As God opens the ground to swallow up Dathan and Abiram he does a  $\text{נִחַדְתִּי}$ .<sup>3</sup> As God meets the disobedient house of Israel he speaks of the things he caused to happen before and then speaks of the new things that he will do so that Israel cannot attribute them to an idol.

' Now I am revealing new things to you, things hidden and unknown to you, created ( $\text{נִחַדְתִּי}$ ) just now, this very moment. '

Isaiah 48. 6a-7a.

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1. Jacob Old Testament p.226.
  2. Jeremiah 11.1 - 12.
  3. Numbers 16.30.

(See also Exodus 34.10, **לֹא-יִבְרָאֵךְ** and Jeremiah 31. 22  
**אֶת-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר**).

When the act of God is a revelation of the holy and terrible God then it is a great and terrible thing, **נִוְרָא**! When God sends Nathan with his promise to David, the king prays saying;

' Is there another people on earth like your people Israel with a God setting out to redeem them and make them his people, make them renowned, work great and terrible things on their behalf ...? ' **נִקְאוֹת**.  
 II Samuel 7. 23 Yahwist.

In the passage from Exodus 34. 10 referred to above the works of God are **כִּי-נִוְרָא**.

The miraculous can also be the act of the sovereign and powerful God, 1) **גָּדוֹל**<sup>2</sup> Psalm 21. 7., . 2) **נִבְרָהוֹת**<sup>3</sup> Psalm 106. 2.

When it is the act of the hidden and transcendent God it is **פִּלְאֵל** as when God 'worked wonders for their ancestors on the plain of Zoan'.  
 Psalm 78. 12.

The more commonly used word for the action of the hidden and transcendent God is **נִפְלְאוֹת מֵ. נִפְלֵא**<sup>4</sup>. This term is used for the miracles of nature in Job 9. 10 and 37. 19 and by the Psalmist and Isaiah to describe miracles of history at Psalm 78. 11 and Isaiah 29. 14 for example.

One of the two words which are used most frequently to describe the miraculous, **אוֹת** is concerned with the function of the event i.e. that it was a sign, rather than its nature, i.e. that it was a wonder-producing event. The use of this word indicates that an event

1. From **אָרַע** = to fear, Niph. 3. pl. of **יָרַע** = strength, might.

2. from **גָּדוֹל** = great, mighty 4. from Niph. of **פָּלַע** = to make wonderful.

is not revelatory merely because it is intrinsically amazing or wonder-producing e.g. a stick turning into a serpent. Such an event could be magic and we shall see below the criteria for distinguishing miracle from magic that are developed in the Patristic period.<sup>1</sup> An event that is not intrinsically amazing or wonder-producing can be revelatory e.g. Jeremiah 1. 11-12. The revelation here concerns a play on words. Jeremiah sees an almond branch,  $\text{טֵרֶם}$  (Shakedh) and by a play on the word sees that God is setting a watch  $\text{טִיר}$  (Shokedh). The prophet receives the word and the word evokes faith and perception and the almond branch becomes a sign. When an externally common place event is revelatory then for that reason, and not for any intrinsic capacity to amaze or cause wonder, it will be wonderful. The essential character of the event is that it is revelatory and is perceived as revelatory by faith.

The other word  $\text{מִלְאָה}$  (translated in LXX as  $\tau\epsilon\rho\alpha\varsigma$ ) refers to a splendid or conspicuous deed of God and is a sign of particular revelatory intensity. This word frequently occurs with  $\text{מִלְאָה}$  (plural of  $\text{מִלְאָה}$ ) and together the two are frequently translated as 'signs and wonders'. We cannot understand the relationship of these two words in describing a miraculous event in the same way that Origen describes the relationship of  $\sigma\upsilon\mu\phi\epsilon\iota\omicron\nu$  and  $\tau\epsilon\rho\alpha\varsigma$ . (see section of Greek words).<sup>2</sup> Although translated as  $\tau\epsilon\rho\alpha\varsigma$ ,  $\text{מִלְאָה}$  does not have the same meaning as  $\tau\epsilon\rho\alpha\varsigma$  but includes the idea of revelation as well as of wonder.

Jacob points to a relativity of time and place as well as the faith of the observer in the nature of a miracle. His point is best quoted in full.

'The crossing of the Red Sea only becomes a miracle by a concatenation of circumstances, firstly the presence of the Israelites at that particular moment, and still more that of Moses who gives to these circumstances a religious interpretation. This is a point whose importance

1. See p. 203 below. 2. See p. 282 below.

must be stressed: a fact is not a miracle except as a function of the place and time in which it takes place. '1

It is convenient at this point to examine the implications of Jacob's comment, before examining further the Old Testament understanding of the miraculous and the place of the spirit-filled  $\aleph^{\text{v}} \overline{\text{I}} \overline{\text{I}}^2$  in the occurrence of the miraculous, because it expresses with great clarity one of the two poles between which the understanding of the miraculous moves throughout the period under examination.

Jacob expresses the functionalist or relativist understanding of miracles; that is that miracles are signs because of the faith of the observer and of the circumstances in which the event is experienced. Without faith in the observer and in different circumstances the event would not be a sign and would not therefore be a miracle. It is correct to say that this understanding of the miraculous, expressed in this way, would never have been held during the period which is under examination i.e. the Old Testament period, but it is possible, without anachronism, to see that elements of this understanding are present in the way in which the miraculous was understood not only in the Old Testament period but throughout the whole period under examination. The implication of this view is that there is no event which is a miracle just because it causes wonder. It is the perception of the event as a sign that makes it wonderful not the experience of the event as wonderful that makes it a sign. The intrinsic wonder-producing qualities of an event by themselves are therefore of no concern. They are meaningless unless the event is a sign.

A further implication of this view is that an event is not a miracle unless it is a sign to someone. A revelatory sign does not take place in a vacuum but to particular people in particular situations, in Jacob's words quoted above 'a fact is not a sign and a miracle except as a function of the time in which it takes place.'

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1. Jacob Old Testament p.224

2.  $\aleph^{\text{v}} \overline{\text{I}} \overline{\text{I}}$  = a prophet.

The functionalist understanding is, in the Old Testament, and as will be seen, in the New Testament, an important element in the understanding of the miraculous and is the natural implication of the use of words translated as 'sign' but also of the use of words e.g.  $\mu\eta\chi$  ( $\sigma\eta\mu\epsilon\iota\omicron\nu\lambda\alpha\chi$ )  $\mu\eta\chi$   $\gamma\epsilon\gamma\eta$ ,  $\gamma\epsilon\gamma\eta$  ( $\delta\omicron\nu\nu\alpha\mu\iota\varsigma\lambda\alpha\chi$ ) whose basic meaning does not refer to an event which is wonderful in itself. It is, however, as expressed by Jacob, a modern view.

The more general understanding of the miraculous, the other pole of the understanding, can be termed the essentialist understanding.<sup>1</sup> In its simplest form this view holds that a miracle is an objectively wonder-producing event (the origin of the word 'miracle') which is revelatory precisely because it is wonderful. The obvious difficulty of this view during the Biblical and Patristic period is the existence of wonder-workers and magicians. It is never possible, during the whole period under examination, to rely only upon the wonder-producing elements of an event to authenticate it as a miracle. There were always too many people who could produce similar effects but whose actions in no way constituted revelation. The strength of the essentialist understanding was its apologetic value. The Fathers of the Church pointed to the miracles of Jesus as evidence of his divine nature. They were also, however, involved in seeking to prove the miracles of Jesus were authentic over against the work of magicians. The apologetic use of miracle, as will be seen below, caused as many problems as it solved.

Throughout the whole of the period under examination the understanding of the miraculous swings from greater emphasis on one view to greater emphasis on the other. The fundamental view of the Old Testa-

1.e.g. Augustine de util. cred. 34 PL 42.90, see below p. 251

<sup>1</sup> 'An effect produced by God in the bodily universe, outside the order of created nature, is called a miracle.' Aquinas Summa Theol. 1a, q. 105, a. 7.

<sup>2</sup> 'A miracle is a wondrous fact or event, beyond the power of any creature and produced by almighty God.' Aquinas Summa Theol. 1a 11ae, q. 178, a. 2.

ment seems to be functionalist. The basic understanding of the miraculous is that a miracle is a sign. This follows clearly from the widespread use of  $\text{נִיח}$ .

These considerations raised by Jacob's comment did not, of course, enter the minds of the Old Testament writers. The question raised by a wonder-causing event did not concern the possibility of such an event but whether the event was magic (or the work of a minor god or demon) or an event in which Yahweh was revealed. The point is well made by Martin-Archard. 'Confronted with facts which seem to be wonderful, Israel does not ask: "Is this occurrence possible? Is it true?", but "What is its message?"' The competition between Moses and the Egyptian magicians so often quoted as an example of the penetration of Egyptian magic into the Old Testament tradition of the miraculous is, in fact, an episode that demonstrates the superiority of the power of the man of God over the power of the magicians.<sup>2</sup> It is framed within the context of Egyptian magic and Moses was clearly thought to be a magician among magicians and the acts attributed to him represent the most essentialist understanding of the miraculous. It is significant, however, that this episode is the only one in which a man of God is shown to compete with magicians on their terms, the greatest degree of penetration of the tradition of Egyptian magic into the Old Testament tradition. The power of God totally defeats the power of the magicians.

The great miracle of Israel's experience of Yahweh in Egypt is the Passover and the Exodus, to the latter of which Jacob's comment is addressed and about which his comment is most apt. The competition

1. Martin - Archard art. 'Miracle' in Vocabulary of the Bible ed. Von Allmen

2. Exodus 8.7 & 9.



between Elijah and the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel is not the same type of event.<sup>1</sup> It demonstrates, rather, the impotence of all other gods but Yahweh.

The Miracle and the  $\text{חֲזַקְיָא}$  (Prophet).

The intensified moment of revelation is inseparable in the Old Testament from the  $\text{חֲזַקְיָא}$ , the man of God through whom God acts. The acts of revelation that he works are extensions of the revelation that he is. God acts in the life of the  $\text{חֲזַקְיָא}$  and so the acts of the  $\text{חֲזַקְיָא}$  are not his acts but the acts of God in him. As the political and economic life of Israel becomes secularised God's representatives are found among the prophets who re-assert God's concern with the whole life of Israel. It is in God and his prophet and the miracles God works through his prophets that Israel finds its protection.

The prophet Elijah comes with the word of God and with miracles which are acted words of God. His confrontation with the prophets of Baal culminates with the great miracle which demonstrates God's supremacy over other gods, a supremacy that Elijah proclaimed in his preaching. At his ascension his title is 'The chariots of Israel and its chargers.' II Kings 2. 12. The prophets are the true protection of Israel and their miracles and preaching are the acts of God in which alone Israel is secure. It is folly to look elsewhere for security.

' Woe to those who go down to Egypt to seek help there, who build their hopes on cavalry, who rely on the number of chariots and on the strength of mounted men, but never look to the Holy One of Israel nor consult Yahweh. ' Isaiah 31. 1.

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1. 1 Kings 18.

The message does not change in the hundred years between the ministry of Elijah and the prophecy of Isaiah. The prophet's word and the prophet's miracles are the witness and the action of God in whom, alone, Israel must place its trust. The occurrence of miracles in Israel's history is not consistent. Since they are acts of God in His work of bringing Israel to the fulfillment of her vocation they occur with particular intensity at the times of crisis. Miracles occur at the Exodus, at the birth of the people; at the beginning of the prophetic age when Israel has to assert the primacy of Yahweh over the territorial gods of Canaan; over two hundred years later at the time of Deutero-Isaiah when Israel meets a world empire and the universal power of Yahweh has to be asserted; in the exile when the intensity of Israel's suffering is met by the response of intensified redemptive activity; and finally in the later Maccabean era in the time of Israel's crisis. The occurrence and perception of the miraculous in times of crisis is not only a biblical phenomenon; the correlation of concern with the miraculous with times of anxiety is suggested by E.R. Dodds.<sup>1</sup>

The miraculous understood as an extraordinary or spectacular event has three common features throughout the Old Testament.

Firstly miracles are the complement of the prophetic word. They proclaim in events what the word of the prophet proclaims, that is the primacy of God, and just as the word needs a hearer so the miracle needs a witness. The effect upon the witness of the word and the miracle is the same; either the witness hears and obeys or his heart is hardened. This is true of the Egyptians at the time of the Exodus, of the Assyrians before Jerusalem under Sennacherib and of the Babylonians at the end of the exile.

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1. Jacob Old Testament p.224
  2. Dodds Age of Anxiety p.53 ff, p.84.  
cf. Lietzmann Founding of the Church  
Universal English translation London  
1950 pp. 144 - 146.

The miracle is a prophetic act, the redemptive and prophetic word acted out. This characteristic of the miraculous is present in the New Testament also.

Secondly the miracle is the forerunner of the new age when God will live among his people and restore all things to their original wholeness. The miracles of healing and the miracles of raising the dead are acts in which nature is restored to its original state. The nature miracles have the same eschatological significance and demonstrate it most clearly.

In the nature-miracles there is an implied dualism in the rebelliousness of the sea and the darkness, the elements of the original chaos out of which God created all things. (The development of the doctrine of creation 'ex nihilo' is examined below).

The sea constitutes the great menace, תהומות, the tiamat of Babylonian myth. The great nature miracles in which God subjects the waters to his sovereignty are acts of victory over darkness and chaos. The waters trembled with fear and revolt at the Exodus.

' When the waters saw it was you, God,  
When the waters saw it was you, they recoiled,  
Shuddering to their depths ( תהומות ).'

Psalm 77. 16

Any turbulence or rebellions can be characterised as partaking of the nature of the rebellious waters.

This understanding of the miraculous persists throughout the whole of the Bible. Jesus uses the same command to still raging devils and the raging sea. (e.g. φημώθητι ; Mark 1. 25. πεφίμωσο ; Mark 4. 39 φημώθητι ; Luke 4. 35. 'Be still' or 'Be quiet' in each case).

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1. Isaiah 17.12., Jeremiah 6.23.

The miracles of the Old and New Testament are signs of God's final victory over chaos and the dark forces of the world, a victory which is complete when the new earth and the new heavens appear and there is no more sea; καὶ ἡ θάλασσα οὐκ ἔστιν ἔτι Revelation 21. 1 and

there is no more night; καὶ νύξ οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι Revelation 22. 5.

Thirdly miracles are signs which strengthen faith and confirm the promises. Moses is given power to work a miracle 'so that they may believe.' (Exodus 4. 5) The relationship between faith and miracle changes. We have seen that faith turns the simplest observation into a miracle by seeing a sign in it. In these cases faith can be said to create the miracle. The absence of faith does not, however, cause the reports of miracles to cease although the importance and nature of the miraculous is changed at these times. When the period of prophetic inspiration closes, seeking for miracles becomes a substitute for faith. In the record of the Chronicler and in the Priestly narrative generally the sense of the immediacy of God's presence weakens, a sign of weakening faith, and the miraculous is sought out as a proof of God's presence with Israel, a presence that was undoubted in earlier times. The long prayer of Jehoshaphet in II Chronicles 20 seeks to bring God's action on to the battlefield and it is the message of the prophet that the battle is God's already. The lack of faith which Jehoshaphat shows in seeking for a miracle is rebuked by the prophet. The new request for miracles is rebuked and Israel is recalled to its faith in Yahweh.

The Priestly editor and the author of Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah, who both lived in the second half of the 4th. Century B.C.,<sup>2</sup> demonstrate

1. Jeremiah 1.11 - 12. 2. Oesterley and Robinson p.112. Articles 'P' and 'code of Holiness' in The Oxford Dictionary of The Christian Church ed. F.L.Cross.

well the growing sense of God's removal from Israel's immediate experience and with that a diminishing sense of the miraculous. The great original miracle of the Exodus becomes less important and the more remote and abstract miracle of the Creation grows in importance.

In the Priestly narrative and in the writings of the author of the Chronicles God becomes a cultic God rather than the God of history. Wellhausen's comment, quoted and criticised by Von Rad, succeeds in summing up the change which has taken place in Israel's understanding of the presence and work of God in the messianic king, David.

' See what Chronicles has made out of David! The founder of the kingdom has become the founder of the Temple and the public worship, the king at the head of his companions in arms has become the singer and master-of-ceremonies at the head of a swarm of priests and levites; his clear cut figure has become a feeble holy picture, seen through a cloud of incense. ' <sup>1</sup>

The tendency to seek miracles for their own sake grows as the immediate sense of God's presence decreases. The author of the preface to II Maccabees, in giving an account of what is to follow, writes;

' The story of Judas Maccabeus and his brothers ... together with the wars against Antiochus Epiphanes and his son Eupator, and the manifestations that came down from heaven to hearten the brave champions of Judaism .... '

II Maccabees 2. 19ff.

The same attitude towards the works of God is found in the apocryphal book, II Esdras 13. 44-47 R.S.V.

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1. Von Rad Old Testament 1 p.350 n.
  2. Von Rad Old Testament 1 p.449

3. The miraculous understood as God's remote power in the miracle of creation against which the Wisdom writers develop their primitive philosophy and reflect upon the problems of life and dispense generalised moral advice.

The Wisdom Literature is not, any more than any other part of the Old Testament, an homogeneous whole. It contains elements of the same understanding of the miraculous as the rest of the Old Testament. Our concern therefore is with the general content of the Wisdom Literature where a distinctive understanding of the miraculous is evident. The distinctive characteristic of the Wisdom writers is that they have no great concern for the miraculous either as God's immediate guidance of history and nature or as spectacular and wonderful events. 'The concept of miracle had changed. These circles no longer designated as miracle the breaks in the historical nexus and the isolated "signs". .... in the circles of wisdom teaching, interest in the traditions of saving history had grown weak. It was all the more turned towards the miracle of Creation, its systematic arrangement, its technical riddles and its rules. These are the תורתא which the Wisdom Literature praises.'<sup>1</sup> They did not see the work of God in individual events touching their lives and presenting them with the demand for a response. The work of God became the subject of intellectual reflection. The two speeches of God in Job 38-41 show an understanding of God's knowledge and activity that is more like the prophetic writing of Amos than the rest of the Wisdom Literature and they stand as two of the small group of exceptions in this literature in which the activity of God is immediately experienced and reflected upon.

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1. Von Rad Old Testament 1 p.449

The concern of Wisdom Literature is the wisdom necessary for successful life and in its basic content parallels the wisdom literature of the rest of the Ancient World. References to the work of God lack the immediacy i.e. the sense of contact with the activity of God in their lives, of the rest of the Old Testament. The references are generalised advice rather than reflection on the experience of an encounter with God.

' Listen then kings, and understand; rulers of remotest lands, take warning; hear this you who have thousands under your rule, who boast of your hordes of subjects. For power is a gift to you from the Lord, sovereignty is from the Most High; he himself will probe your acts and scrutinise your intentions. '

Wisdom 6. 1-4

In earlier times Yahweh did not 'scrutinise intentions', he visited his people to bring them back from a proud independence of him.

God's activity in history is not understood as an immediate experience of Yahweh but as the work of an unrecognised agent behind the events of life which, unlike the events of Genesis 24, can be understood in non-religious terms.

' There is an evil I observe under the sun, that weighs men down: suppose a man has received from God riches, property, honours.- nothing at all is left for him to wish for. Yet God does not give him the chance to enjoy them, but some stranger enjoys them. '

Ecclesiastes 6. 1-3

The Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament has a strong relationship to Greek and Egyptian wisdom literature and shares with them a concern for science which is unique in the Old Testament.

There is no serious consideration in this literature of the activity of God in miracles. It is not a subject which concerns them and the Wisdom Literature adds very little to the Old Testament understanding of the miraculous

### Conclusion.

The Old Testament understood the miraculous

- a) as God's guidance of history and nature and of the detail of incidents which form part of God's formation of his people;
- b) as the revelation of God's power and being. The variety of ways in which God's power and being are revealed is shown by the many different words which are used to describe miraculous events.
- c) As the sense of the immediacy of God's action diminishes in the Priestly narrative and in the Wisdom Literature
  - 1) the Creation rather than the Exodus becomes the subject of Israel's religious contemplation.
  - 2) Miracles are sought as stimulants of faith and as the re-assurance for Israel of God's care rather than being events perceived in faith to be the activity of God among his people.

While the Old Testament understood the miraculous in these different ways the common underlying characteristic of the miraculous was that it was revelatory; that it was a sign. If an event caused wonder but did not reveal the activity of God it was magic not miracle. (Exodus 7. 12). We cannot tell if an intrinsically amazing event was believed to be revelatory just because it was amazing. We do know that events which were not intrinsically amazing were revelatory signs. We can say that



any event which was not revelatory was not a miracle; the Old Testament definition of miracle is that it is an event in which God is revealed.

The man of God, the  $\text{אֱלֹהִים}$ , is most usually the agent of God's miraculous action which forms, with his preaching, the proclamation of God's sovereignty and the call to obedience and repentance. The great nature miracles are clearly examples of God's victory over the darkness and chaos, frequently seen in the form of the sea. This eschatological understanding of the miraculous is perhaps the clearest link between the understanding of the miraculous in the Old Testament and in the New Testament.

As one of the ways in which the Hebrews thought of the revelatory act of God was as an act of creation,  $\text{בְּרִיאָה}$ , so for the Wisdom writers, as we have seen, the initial act of creation was itself the great miracle. It will complete our understanding of the significance of this great miracle if we examine the development of the doctrine that God created all that there is 'ex nihilo', out of nothing. Since the understanding develops throughout the whole of the period under examination it will be convenient to examine that development at this point.

### The Development of the Doctrine of Creation "Ex Nihilo".

The doctrine that God created the universe "ex nihilo", as opposed to the two alternatives, that is that God either created the universe out of pre-existent matter or out of his own substance, developed slowly and was not fully stated or held by the Fathers of the Church until perhaps Augustine. In post-biblical Judaism the doctrine was firmly held and in Genesis Rabbah 1.9 the rabbi proceeds from Genesis 1 to prove the doctrine. The apocryphal and pseudepigraphical writings present the full range of opinion on the subject.

The great miracle of creation came only lately to take its place at the centre of Israel's religious concern. To begin with the central religious experience of Israel's history was the Exodus. The unphilosophical and concrete Hebrew mind did not speculate about events which were not part of Israel's history, indeed they did not speculate much about any matter. The Creation, therefore, was not a subject for philosophical discussion.

The creation myths of the Near East and the philosophical speculation of the Greeks did not proceed from a belief in creation "ex nihilo". The creation myths spoke of forming the world from original chaos. The Greeks mostly proposed the existence of matter from eternity from which God formed the world. Clement of Alexandria preserves a fragment of Heraclitus which states the Greek view clearly enough.

"This cosmos, the same for all, was made neither by a god nor a man but it always has been and is and will be fire ever-living,

kindling itself in measures and quenching itself in measures."

The argument continued with different definitions but the basic statement stayed the same. It is not until Hierocles, a fifth century Neo-Platonist, who was in close touch with such Christian philosophers as Aeneas of Gaza, that a Greek non-Christian philosopher who believes in creation "ex nihilo" can be found and no other Greek philosopher agreed with him. The influence of Greek thought can be seen in Gregory of Nyssa, who tried to solve the problem by accepting the belief of Chalcidius that primal matter consisted of intelligible spiritual elements, matter without qualities.<sup>2</sup>

It is not until relatively late that Jewish thought spoke of creation "ex nihilo". As late as the beginning of the fifth century B.C. Job 28 and 38 speak of God creating the world out of pre-existent chaos through wisdom. This parallels contemporary Greek thought. Slightly earlier, or contemporary with Job, statements that strongly imply that God created "ex nihilo" are found in Isaiah 45.5 - 7 and 45.18.<sup>3</sup> It is not until the Priestly writer that the doctrine is stated with very little ambiguity, the use of  $\aleph \beth \daleth$  implying creation "ex nihilo"; "In the beginning God created ( $\aleph \beth \daleth$ ) the heavens and the earth" although the second verse is a clear reflection of the more common belief that God created the world out of pre-existent chaos; "Now the earth was a formless void, there was darkness over the deep, and God's spirit hovered over the water".<sup>4</sup> The Psalms speak of God's creation but do not reflect on the statement. As mentioned above post-biblical Judaism defended the doctrine from the Old Testament

1. Clement of Alexandria str.5.104.2
2. Chalcidius Commentary on the Timaeus 274  
Gregory of Nyssa Hexaemeron PG44.69C
3.  $\aleph \beth \daleth$  from  $\aleph \beth \daleth$

4. Late 4th Century B.C. cf. the 'formless matter' of Wisdom 11.17.

but there was very little to support the doctrine in the Bible.

It is not until II Maccabees 7.28 written some time between c. 140 and 63 B.C. that the doctrine is unequivocally stated. "I implore you, my child, observe heaven and earth, consider all that is in them, and acknowledge that God made them out of what did not exist". Wisdom 11.17 written at about the same time speaks of "the hand that from formless matter created the world". This is a statement of traditional Platonic teaching.

There are no unequivocal statements of the doctrine in the New Testament. This again is not surprising. The central concern of the New Testament is the coming of the Messiah and the Resurrection of Jesus, the new eschatological creation effected in Christ. This and not the Creation is the context of the Church's experience and contemplation. The concern with the Creation is always christological, for example in I Corinthians 8.6. and Colossians 1.16. It would be quite wrong to examine these texts as though they were philosophical propositions about the nature of creation. They were not and S. Paul nowhere indicates that he believed in anything but creation "ex nihilo". John 1.3. and Hebrews 1.2 - 3 in their christological reflection on the creation certainly imply a belief in creation "ex nihilo" though do not explicitly state it. When Origen wishes to bring scriptural authority for the doctrine he relies on II Maccabees 7.28 and Hermas. mandata 1.1. <sup>1</sup> 'καὶ ποιήσας ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος τὸ εἶναι τὰ πάντα..<sup>2</sup>

Hermas is the first post-biblical writer to state the doctrine clearly.

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1. Origen princ. 2.1.5., Jo. 1.17.

2. Loeb Classical Library. Apostolic Fathers vol. 2. p. 71.

"First of all, believe that there is one God, who created and formed everything, and created everything from non-existence into existence."

Hermas writes in the first half of the second century and is quoted with approval by Irenaeus, Origen, Methodius and Athanasius among others.

The subsequent debate among the Fathers is between those still strongly influenced by Platonism i.e. the belief that the world was shaped by God (or for Platonists, the Demiurge) out of pre-existent formless matter and those, mainly Latin Fathers, who teach the doctrine of creation "ex nihilo". Justin seems unclear about the difference between Platonism and Christianity and his statement that God created the universe is concerned with the shaping of the universe in time.<sup>2</sup> He believed that Plato and Genesis taught that "God made the world, having altered matter which was formless."<sup>3</sup> His pupil Tatian, in his brief sojourn in orthodoxy between paganism and gnosticism between about 150 A.D. and 170 A.D., was the first Christian writer after Hermas to state the doctrine with unambiguous clarity.

"Our God has no place in time, since he alone is without beginning and is himself the beginning of all. God is a spirit; he does not extend through matter but is the founder of material spirits and the forms in matter. He is invisible and intangible, since he is the father of sensible and visible things. We know him through his creation and we understand the invisible working of his power through what he has made. I am not willing to worship the creation which he

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1. Hermas mandata 1.1.

2. Justin, apol. 59, dial. 5.

3. Justin, apol. 59

has made for us ..... Matter is not without a beginning as God is, nor is it equal in power to God by being without beginning. It is a created thing, though it was not created by any other than the fashioner of all."

He is followed by Theophilus of Antioch in the late second century, who in his second book of his apology to Autolycus<sup>2</sup> argues at length with many quotations from classical Greek, for the logical necessity of the doctrine of creation "ex nihilo" for Christians. He puts forward what was becoming the standard argument about the relationship between God and the material world, that is that if God made the world out of pre-existent matter the matter would share his eternity and be the equal of God. Both he and Tertullian argue against a Middle Platonist writer, Hermogenes, about whom nothing but his argument is known. Tertullian after rehearsing Theophilus' argument goes to the fundamental point in the development of the doctrine, a point taken up later by Augustine.

"It is more suitable for God to have created by his free will than by necessity, that is from nothing rather than from matter. It is more worthy to believe that God is free, even though the author of evils, than to believe him a slave." <sup>3</sup>

This vigorous defence of orthodoxy did not completely kill off the Middle Platonist belief in pre-existent matter. Elements of it occur in Clement of Alexandria. He sees Genesis 1.2 as support for the belief that matter is pre-existent and at one point quotes this belief with apparent approval.

".... undoubtedly that prophetic expression, "Now the earth was

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1. Tatian ad Graecos 4.

2. Theophilus Autolycus 2.

3. Tertullian Herm. 18 cf. Theophilus Autolycus 2.10.

invisible and formless", supplied them with the ground of material essence',<sup>1</sup> i.e. pre-existent formless matter. Pelikan<sup>2</sup> and Osborn<sup>3</sup> argue that a passage from the Exhortation to the Greeks is evidence that Clement believed in creation "ex nihilo". "The sheer volition of God is the making of the universe. For God alone made it because he alone is God in his being (ὁὕτως) . By his sheer act of will he creates (δημιουργεῖ) and after he has merely willed it, it has come into being".<sup>4</sup> In neither case is Clement addressing himself to the question of creation. In the Stromatata he is arguing against the heresy that God has a physical relationship with his creation and in the Exhortation to the Greeks he is ridiculing the worship of images or of any created thing. His position is not clearly stated and the position generally in Alexandria in the first two centuries of this era is unclear. Philo speaks at one point of creation of "formless matter",<sup>5</sup> the Platonic formula, but seems also to assert belief in creation "ex nihilo".<sup>6</sup>

Clement's successor at Alexandria, Origen, was strongly influenced by contemporary Platonism and some of his arguments are similar to those attributed to Hermogenes by Theophilus of Antioch and Tertullian. However the Alexandrine confusion continues. In his commentary on John 1.17 he quotes II Maccabees and Hermas<sup>7</sup> against the Middle Platonist teaching and in a fragment of a commentary on Genesis<sup>8</sup> preserved by Eusebius he states that God, unlike a human workman, is not in need of materials; he makes matter himself. In de principiis 1.2.10 and 3.5.3. he avoids the idea that an omnipotent God was ever in solitary splendour but he did not proceed, as

1. Clement of Alexandria str. 6.14.
2. Pelikan Catholic Tradition p. 36
3. Osborn Clement of Alexandria p. 33
4. Clement of Alexandria prot. 4.63.3.
5. Philo heres. 140., spec. 1.328.
6. Wolfson Philo 1. pp. 300 - 310
7. Hermas mandata 1.
8. Origen comm. in Gen. 1 ap. Eusebius p. e. 7.22.

others did, to the view that for God to be omnipotent there must be something for him to exercise his power over and that something must be pre-existent matter.<sup>1</sup> He does not accept the full implications of divine omnipotence and with Hermogenes accepted that since God is immutable he cannot begin to do anything.<sup>2</sup> Irenaeus retreated into the silence of the scripture on God's activity before creation and said that the matter should not be discussed.<sup>3</sup>

Origen's position seems confused but it is hard to enter into the subtlety and breadth of his thought in a brief survey. The fact which does become very clear in his and others' discussion is that we have come a long way from Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews guiding the life of his people.

Methodius in the 3rd. century demolishes Origen's views concerning the pre-existence of matter,<sup>4</sup> and Basil of Caesarea in the 4th. century rejected the Greek belief in the pre-existence of matter but ignored the teaching of Origen.<sup>5</sup> His brother, Gregory of Nyssa, had ideas strongly affected by Chalcidius which were discussed above.<sup>6</sup>

The difficulties of the Greeks seemed not to exist for the Latins. Lactantius teaches the doctrine of creation 'ex nihilo' and quotes Epicurus and Democritus in support of the view that the universe had a beginning and will have an end.<sup>7</sup> Augustine's journey to orthodox Christian belief by way of Manichaeistic Dualism, Academic scepticism and Neo-Platonism led him through the complete range of beliefs. His final position set out in no less than six commentaries on the creation as narrated in Genesis is a strong and complete vindication of the doctrine

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|--|-------------------------------|
| 1. Origen princ.1.2.10.  | 5. Basil hex.2.2.             |
| 2. Origen princ 3.5.3.   | 6. Nyssa hex. PG 44.69 C      |
| 3. Irenaeus adv.haer.2.10.2.,2.28.7.   | 7. Lactantius div.inst.2.8.8. |
| 4. Methodius creat.2.494.  | 7.1.10.                       |
| 8. Augustine de Gen.c.Man.,de Gen. ad<br>litt.liber imperfectus.,de Gen.ad<br>litt.,de civ.Dei 11,12. retract.1.18<br>confessiones 11,12,13. |                               |



which refutes the Middle Platonist teaching. His teaching is based not so much on biblical exegesis or on reason but on his belief in the free omnipotent will of God. (cf Tertullian.)

The clearest statement of the doctrine distinguishing Christian belief from Greek philosophy is to be found in *de civitate dei* 7.29.

'We may put it this way: we worship God, not the sky and the earth, which are the two elements of which this world exists; we do not worship a soul or souls, diffused through all living beings; we worship God, who made the sky and the earth and everything that exists in them, who made every soul, the souls which simply exist in some manner, without sensibility or reason, and sentient souls as well, and those endowed with intelligence.'

The alternatives to this doctrine were intolerable to Catholic belief and it was the logical necessity of the doctrine which eventually led to its universal acceptance.

## The Understanding of the Miraculous in the Synoptic Gospels.

### Introduction.

Within the Synoptic tradition there is no understanding of nature as an immutable system over against God and no evidence of scientific knowledge.

The influence of scientific thinking present in Wisdom emerges perhaps in James 1.17 and 3.6

'wheel of creation' in James 3.6

' Every good and every perfect gift  
comes down from heaven: it comes  
down from God, the creator of the  
heavenly lights, who does not  
change or cause darkness by  
turning' James 1.17

Popular philosophy is the source of these diatribe illustrations,

' And the tongue is like a fire.  
It is a world of wrong, occupying  
its place in our bodies and  
spreading evil throughout our  
whole being. It sets on fire the  
entire course of our existence  
with fire that comes to it  
from hell itself. Man is able  
to tame and has tamed all other  
creatures ...' James 3.6+7.

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1.W.L.Knox J.T.S. 46 pp.10 - 17 1945

2.J.H.Ropes The Epistle of James 1916  
p.231.

Grant, however, believes that the author does not really understand the meaning of the Orphic expression, 'wheel of creation'. James 3.6

The synoptic gospels reveal a certain commonsense observation of such things as the normal fruit of fruit trees (e.g. Matthew 3.12 and 7.16). The author of Luke - Acts knows some geography (Acts 2.5), which is perhaps more rhetorical than scientific; he provides an early account of a shipwreck (Acts 27.39ff), and the author's description of the unity in mind and heart of the early Christian community at Acts 4.32 seems to reveal some pythagorean influence. Paul's speech in Athens reflects some stoic influence (Acts 17.22-31), e.g. Acts 17.

23-29

' For as I walked through your city  
and looked at the places where you  
worship, I found an altar on which  
is written, 'To an Unknown God'.  
That which you worship, then, even  
though you do not know it, is what  
I now proclaim to you. God, who  
made the world and everything in it,  
is Lord of heaven and earth and does  
not live in man-made temples. Nor  
does he need anything that we can  
supply by working for him, since it  
is he himself who gives life and  
breath and everything else to every-  
one. From one man he created all

races of mankind and made them live  
 throughout the whole earth. He him-  
 self fixed beforehand the exact  
 times and the limits of the places  
 where they would live. He did  
 this so that they would look for  
 him, and perhaps find him as they  
 felt about for him. Yet God is  
 actually not far from any one of  
 us; as someone has said,

'In him we live and move and  
 exist.'

It is as some of your poets have  
 said,

'We too are his children.'

Since we are God's children, we  
 should not suppose that his nature  
 is anything like an image of gold  
 or silver or stone, shaped by the  
 art and skill of man.'

The latter may well be a reflection of Paul's use of stoic language in  
 his first real contact as a missionary with a Greek audience unfamiliar  
 with the Jewish culture of his own education.

The suggestion that Luke-Acts contains medical references that  
 might well be expected from 'Luke the physician' seems like an attempt  
 to create, from negligible evidence, a case for authorship by the Luke

of Col. 4.14, II Tim. 4.11 and Philemon 24., allied with the 'we' passages of Acts. The few medical references are thought to be insufficiently technical to mark the author as a physician and scientist.<sup>1</sup>

The suggestion that Luke knew the failure of the sun at the Crucifixion in Luke 23.45 to be an eclipse is to miss the strong eschatological<sup>2</sup> meaning of the various signs which accompany the death of Jesus in the synoptic gospels.

Apart from these commonsense observations and the slight influence of some contemporary Greek philosophy there is no sign of the influence of scientific thought in the New Testament. The synoptic authors inherit the simple belief of the Old Testament writers that God could do anything, although the acts of God mediated through Jesus the Messiah are never simply remarkable acts but events of profound theological significance. As in the Old Testament the words used to describe the miraculous in the whole of the New Testament (with the exception of Acts) are words which have other, non-miraculous meanings. The word *τέρας* (used in the LXX to translate *תִּשְׁבִּיעַ*<sup>3</sup>), which means a marvel or wonder, is an exception and is used only twice in the synoptic gospels and then to describe the work of false christs. It is used more frequently in Acts, always in the plural and always accompanied by *σημείον* and on two occasions by *δύναμις*.<sup>4</sup> This use will be examined below.

The absence of any consideration of science or philosophy is not however surprising. Although differences of style, purpose and emphasis can be detected between the three synoptic gospels they share

1. Caird Luke p.17 referring to Cadbury  
'The Style and Literary Method of  
Luke' Harvard Theological Studies VI

2. Caird p.253. 3. Abbott - Smith Manual  
Greek Lexicon of the New Testament - *τέρας*.

4. p.80 ff.

the same overriding eschatological concern of urging the reader to prepare for the coming of the Lord. There is no time for other considerations.

The simplest preparation for an examination of the understanding of the miraculous in the synoptic gospels is an analysis of the use and occurrence of the words used to describe the miraculous in Matthew, Mark and Luke-Acts.

#### The Words Used to Describe the Miraculous in the Synoptic Tradition.

The following words are used in the synoptic gospels; δύναμις, σημεῖον, τέρας, παράδοξος, θαυμάσιος. Of these παράδοξος and θαυμάσιος occur only once, παράδοξος at Luke 5.26. It means 'contrary to received opinion, incredible, marvellous'. The marvel of it is in the onlooker's exclamation. δύναμις is sometimes used in this sense both in pagan writers and in the synoptic gospels.

Θαυμάσιος occurs at Matthew 21.15. It occurs frequently in the LXX as a translation of מִלְאָכָה to mean a marvel. The word τέρας occurs only twice in the synoptic gospels and a consideration of its use will be made when the miraculous in Acts is examined;<sup>2</sup>

The occurrence of δύναμις and σημεῖον can best be seen in the following tables.

1. See p.19 above and p.295 f below.
2. See p. 73 below.

δύναμις  
 // = an exact parallel; / = a parallel incident with no use of δύναμις

Table 1 References using Mark as a base	A The miraculous or the power to work miracles	B Attributes of God, Messiah or Spirit	C Other uses	Vulgate
Mk 5. 30//L 8. 46 / Mt 9. 21 Mk 6. 2//Mt 13. 54 /L 4. 22 Mk 6. 5//Mt 13. 58/L 4. 24	power goes out mighty works do no mighty works			virtutem virtutes virtutem
Mk 6. 14//Mt 14. 2/L 9. 7	these powers work in him			virtutes
Mk 9. 1//Mt 16. 28/L 9. 27 Mk 9. 39/L 9. 50 Mk 12. 24//Mt 22. 29/L 20. 27 Mk 13. 25//Mt 24. 29//L 21. 26	a mighty work	the kingdom of God * come with power the power of God the powers that are * in heaven		in virtute virtutem virtutem virtutes

\* an eschatological reference

Mk 13. 26//Mt 24. 30//L 21. 27			the Son of Man in great power * synonym for God		virtute virtutis
Mk 14. 62//Mt 26. 64//L 22. 69					
References using Mt as a base but excluding all the above references					
Mt 6. 13 some readings			the doxology of the Lord's prayer		virtutes virtutes virtutes virtutem
Mt 7. 22		mighty works			
Mt 11. 20/L 10. 13ff		mighty works			
Mt 11. 21//L 10. 13		mighty works		ability	
Mt 25. 15/L 19. 11ff					
References using Luke as a base but excluding all the above references					
Luke 1. 17				the power of Elijah	virtute virtus
Luke 1. 35			the power of the Most High in the power of the Spirit		in virtute
Luke 4. 14/Mk 1. 14/Mt 4. 12					





This table presumes that Mark is the first gospel and lists all the uses of *δύναμις* in Mark with parallel uses in Matthew and Luke (marked //) and incidents when the general narrative is paralleled but the use of *δύναμις* is not (marked /).

In column A the principal use of *δύναμις* is to describe either a mighty work (7 in the plural and 1 in the singular) or the power by which mighty works are effected (7 uses). In this range of use Mark 5.30 // Luke 8.46 / Matthew 9.21 is unusual since:

a) the power to heal is in the clothing of Jesus. The only other comparable references in the New Testament are in Acts 5.15, where the shadow of Peter is said to heal, and Acts 19.11-12, where the clothes of Paul etc. are said to heal. Mark 3.10; 6.56; and Luke 6.19 refer to crowds seeking to touch Jesus in search of a cure. The incidents reported in Acts may indicate a change in the understanding of the miraculous between Luke and Acts. This will be examined below.<sup>1</sup> The important aspect of this incident is that it shows the penetration into the synoptic tradition of a tradition of quasi-magical healing common in the Middle East at this time. It is a tradition which is alleged to go back to Abraham, the sight of whom was said to bring healing to the sick.<sup>1</sup> The suggestion that Jesus was a wonder-worker within this tradition will be examined below.<sup>2</sup>

This is the one detailed example in the synoptic gospels of the later widespread phenomenon of primary and secondary relics which bring healing. The *δύναμις* is believed to be retained, almost like an electric charge, in the relic and then discharged, sometimes to heal or restore to life, sometimes to kill or injure.<sup>3</sup> A later

1. R.Huna c.350 quoted Nineham p.158

2. See p.264 below.

3. e.g. 2 Kings 13.21., 2 Samuel 6.7.

and spectacular example of this in the patristic era is to be found in a letter from S. Gregory the Great to Constantina Augusta<sup>1</sup>, who has asked him for the head of S. Paul or some other part of his body.

'... I neither can nor dare do what you enjoin ... those who saw the body (of S. Paul during an excavation) ..., which they did not indeed presume to touch, all died within ten days.'

b) The *δύναμις* seems to be an almost impersonal force which heals without the conscious will of Jesus. In this respect the healing is unique in form (apart from the final commendation of the woman's faith).

c) The movement of the *δύναμις* out of Jesus as the woman touches him is felt by him without knowing who has been cured. This aspect is not present in Matthew's account but is implied. Luke 6.19 speaks of 'power (that) came out of him that cured them all.' Mark 6.14 (// Matthew 14.2 / Luke 9.7) and Luke 5.17 (Mark 2.1ff / Matthew 9.1ff) use *δύναμις* to describe a power possessed by Jesus which is able to come out of him as though it were a material substance.

It can be seen that *δύναμις* is never used to describe a particular act of healing or exorcism. The use is always general.

The remaining uses of *δύναμις* in this column refer to powers of healing and exorcism possessed by Jesus or given with to his disciples; e.g. Luke 9.1. The *δύναμις* transmitted to his disciples is from on high. The use of *δύναμις* in column A can be further analysed as follows and it will be seen that Mark uses the word in the following ways;

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1. Gregory the Great epp.bk 4.ep.30.

Table 2	Mighty work <sup>1</sup> (a general term)	Power going out	The power to work healings by implication
Mark	3	1	1
cf.			
Matthew	2//Mk. 3 Mt only	nil	1//Mk
Luke	1//Mk. 1 Luke only	1//Mk.	5 Luke only

1. A healing is a mighty work but not  
all mighty works are healings. These

references are to mighty works generally  
but the context implies that they prob-  
ably refer to exorcisms and healings.

It can be seen that Mark and Matthew use *δύναμις* to describe miracles (or once in Mark as the power going out of Jesus to heal) more than Luke whereas the balance is reversed in the use of *δύναμις* to describe the power to heal in Luke. It may be asked whether there is some christological significance in this difference of use as can be found in the different uses of *ἐμπόιον* in the Synoptic gospels and and S. John's gospel. This matter will be examined below.<sup>1</sup>

Of the uses in column B, one use, that in the doxology of the 'Our Father' at Matthew 6. 13 can be ignored. It occurs in only a small number of readings and adds nothing to the understanding of the word. Of the remaining uses three, Mark 9. 1, Mark 13. 25 and 26 and parallels refer to the end of time, to attributes of God or the Son of Man in the last days. One use, Mark 12. 24 and parallels, refers to the power of God which cannot be seen or known by those who fail to understand the truth of the Resurrection, in this case the Sadducees. Of the two uses exclusive to Luke, one, Luke 1. 35, refers to the conception of Jesus by the power of God, and the other, Luke 4. 14, speaks of Jesus returning to Galilee after the Temptation in the power of the Spirit. The incident is paralleled in the other gospels but the use, 'ἐν τῇ δυνάμει τοῦ πνεύματος', is not.

The last relevant use is perhaps the most interesting and completes the chain of power from God through his Messiah to the incident in which the power is used to heal. In this case *δύναμις* is used as a synonym for God (Mark 14. 62 and parallels). This is its only use as a synonym for God, and indicates that *δύναμις* is not only an attribute of God but constitutes the very being of God. The Old Testament words used

<sup>1</sup> p. 64 below.

1  
 reveal the nature of God's being in the same way. Mark 14. 62 is the only such use in canonical scripture but a similar use appears in the apocryphal gospel of S. Peter where the cry of dereliction from the cross is addressed to 'Σύναντισ μου'.<sup>2</sup> The two remaining uses at Matthew 25. 15, and Luke 1. 17, add nothing more to the understanding of Σύναντις.

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1. See p. 18 ff above.

2. Gospel of Peter 19, James The Apo-  
crypha of the New Testament p. 91

Table III 27 10 ✓

References using Mark as a base		C		
		A	B	
		Signs of power or messiahship	Eschatological signs	Signs of false Christs and other uses
				Vulgate
Mk 8. 11//Mt 16. 1 & 12. 38ff.//L 11.16		a sign from heaven or → C		signum
Mk 8. 12//Mt 16. 1 & 12. 39//L 11. 29ff		why seek a sign ... no sign will be given or → C		signum
Mk 13. 4//Mt 24. 3//L 21. 7			what shall be the sign?	signum
Mk 13. 22//Mt 24. 24//L 21. 25				signa
Mk 16. 17 & 20 - late conclusion		miracles	false signs and wonders	signa signis

A B C

References using Mt as a base but excluding all above references	Signs of power or messiahship	Eschatological signs	Signs of false Christs and other uses	Vulgate
Mt 24. 30 / Mk 13. 26 / L 21. 27		Sign of the Son of Man		signum
Mt 26. 48 / Mk 14. 44 / L 22. 47			the sign given by Judas	signum
References using Luke as a base but excluding all the above references				
L 2. 12	sign of the Messiah			signum
L 2. 34	Jesus as a sign to be spoken against			signum
L 21. 11 / Mk 13. 8f / Mt 24. 6f		great signs from heaven		signa
L 21. 25 / Mk 13. 24 / Mt 24. 29		signs in the sun and moon and stars		signa
L 23. 8	see some miracle done by him			signum



σημείον is used less frequently than δύναμις. Of the five uses in Mark all except the use in the final added section are paralleled in Matthew and Luke. The use in the final section refers clearly to miracles. One use in column C refers to the signs and wonders worked by false Christs and σημείον is coupled with τέρατος, ψευδόχριστοι καὶ ψευδοπροφῆται καὶ δώσουσιν σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα<sup>1</sup>

Of the three remaining uses one refers to the signs to be looked for in the last days. The two remaining uses are in the incident in which Jesus refuses to give a sign to those who seek one. The only sign they will receive, in the parallel passages in Matthew and Luke, is the enigmatic sign of Jonah. This may mean either the Resurrection of the Messiah or the preaching of the word. The parable of the rich man and Lazarus might be taken as a comment on this point and indicates that the sign of Jonah is preaching.

' Abraham said "Your brothers have Moses and the prophets to warn them; your brothers should listen to what they say". The rich man answered "That is not enough, father Abraham! But if someone were to rise from death and go to them they would turn from their sins". But Abraham said "If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone were to rise from death". '

The version at Matthew 12. 40, points to the Resurrection. Caird's<sup>2</sup> comment on the Lucan parallel, Luke 11. 29, prefers preaching. Fenton's<sup>3</sup> comment on the two Matthean versions, Matthew 12. 39 and 16. 1 taking into consideration the comment of the author himself at Matthew 12. 40

1. Mark 13.22. 2.Caird p.156.

3.Fenton St Matthew pp.202,261.

sees both the preaching of Jonah and the preaching and miracles of Jesus as having the same purpose, that is to produce repentance, and therefore they are both the same sort of event. 'The miracles of Jesus are only effective signs when they produce repentance.'

This comment of Fenton's raises a further point about the use and significance of *σημεῖον*; that is that it represents the significance of a mighty work when perceived by a witness as a sign of the kingdom producing repentance. A *δύναμις* of God mediated by his Messiah becomes a *σημεῖον* to the one who perceives it in faith and is brought to repentance.<sup>2</sup> A *σημεῖον* is not a spectacular act which can convince people that Jesus is the Messiah. When asked for such a sign Jesus refuses to give a sign and says that no sign will be given.<sup>3</sup> Their lack of faith which demands a sign makes them unable to see the sign which is before them. In the Old Testament an almondtree or the marriage of Hosea to an immoral woman can be signs.<sup>4</sup> The sign is superficially unremarkable but speaks to those who see it in faith.

This use of *σημεῖον* is to be found in the Lucan infancy narratives where Jesus is a sign to be spoken against, Luke 2. 12, and where the sign of the saviour is a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes, Luke 2. 12. The other uses of *σημεῖον* in Luke are eschatological except for Luke 23. 8, where Herod wishes to see some sign/miracle done by Jesus. As in Mark 8. 11-12 and parallels this is a sign that Jesus refuses to give; this compares with the stories of the temptation in which Jesus refuses to demonstrate his Messianic power.

1. Fenton p.261.

2.cf. Origen p. 285 below.

3.Mark 8.12 and parallels.

4. Jeremiah 1.11f., Hosea 1 - 4.

The only two uses exclusive to Matthew are Matthew 24. 30, an eschatological sign, and Matthew 26. 48, where σημεῖον has its normal use, that is the sign given by Judas at the betrayal of Jesus.

The word τέρας occurs only twice in the Synoptic gospels, Mark 13. 22//Matthew 24. 24 and its use is dealt with above,

δύναμις has no single meaning in the Synoptic gospels but ranges in use from references to mighty works, to the power to work miracles, to attributes of God and finally as a synonym of God. σημεῖον has a similarly wide range of use. A σημεῖον cannot be given to convince those who do not believe and quite normal events can be a σημεῖον to those who believe. At the end of time the σημεῖα of the Messiah will be seen at his coming. False christs will show σημεῖα which will seduce even the very elect, if that were possible (Mark 13. 22, and parallels). No indication is given as to how they are to be distinguished from the signs of the Kingdom. In the Synoptic gospels signs perceived as signs of the Kingdom produce repentance but it is possible for merely spectacular signs to be worked by false christs which might evoke a response from the elect by being spectacular.

Jesus the Messiah mediates, usually in response to faith in the case of healings, the δύναμις of God in an eschatological battle with the powers of this age. His exercise and mediation of the power of God is 'un prêche concret' which like all the preaching of the Messiah demands the response of repentance and to those who respond the δυνάμεις are σημεῖα.

### The Synoptic Miracles.

It is against the background of these uses of *δύναμις* and *σημεῖον* that the miracles recorded in the Synoptic Gospels can be examined. They are, together with the preaching of Jesus, signs of the New Age which he inaugurates. They occur in three forms :-

- a) as Isaianic signs, that is the fulfilment of Isaianic prophecies;
- b) as exorcisms;
- c) and as raisings from the dead and nature miracles.

It should be noted that these classifications are not exclusive; that they depend heavily upon the need to realise and fulfil an Old Testament expectation and that they are not immune from the influence of contemporary stories of wonder-workers.

#### a) Miracles as Isaianic Signs

The principal passages from Isaiah which provide the sources of the Isaianic signs are Isaiah 29. 18

' The deaf that day,  
will hear the words of a book,  
and after the shadow of darkness,  
the eyes of the blind will see. '

Isaiah 35. 5 and 6.

' Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,  
the ears of the deaf unsealed,  
then the lame shall leap like a deer  
and the tongues of the dumb shout for joy; '

Isaiah 53. 4 quoted in Matthew 8. 17

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1. See also Is. 61. 14.

' And yet ours were the sufferings he bore,  
ours the sorrows he carried. '

This last passage shows clearly that the mighty works of Jesus are not distinguished from his redemptive work but are signs that the redemptive work of the Messiah saves the whole person. The passage from Isaiah which speaks of redemption is used in Matthew to show that Jesus in healing the sick is fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah.<sup>1</sup>

' That evening they brought him many who were possessed by devils. He cast out the spirits with a word and cured all who were sick. This was to fulfil the prophecy of Isaiah:

"He took our sicknesses away and carried our diseases from us." '

Matthew 8. 16 & 17.

The healing of the paralytic in Mark 2. 1-12 shows the same understanding of the work of Jesus. The paralytic is healed with the words, 'My child, your sins are forgiven.' Mark 2. 5. The healing is a healing of the whole man. The Messiah restores the man to physical and spiritual wholeness.

The importance of the Isaianic signs in the Synoptic tradition's understanding of the miraculous is fundamental. It is to these signs that Jesus points when John the Baptist sends to ask if he is the one who is to come. (Matthew 11. 4ff//Luke 7. 22ff.) They show that Jesus is the one who does these Messianic works and that he is preceded by John the Baptist, who is the type of Elijah, the one who will come before the Messiah on the great and terrible day of the Lord.<sup>2</sup>

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1. cf. Mark 5.34 and Nineham's comment in Nineham pp.158 - 159.

2. cf. Malachi 4.5.

In the Lucan tradition Jesus points, in his usual oblique way, to himself as the fulfilment of Isaiah 61. 1 & 2; Luke 4. 16-30.

The restoration of sight, speech and hearing are the most significant signs that the prophecies are being fulfilled. They are not, however, simply healings. The author of Mark uses the restoration of sight to the blind as an ironic comment on the blindness of the sighted. The blindness of the disciples is followed by the healing of a blind man and the profession of faith, the perception of the truth, by Peter, Mark 8. 21-30. In Mark 10. 32-52 (and parallels) the third prediction of the passion is followed by a passage which reveals the blindness/ignorance of the disciples. This passage is followed by the healing of a blind man (two blind men in Matthew) who follows Jesus on the way. The whole passage is heavy with symbolism. The prediction of the passion is received with incomprehension. The blind man who cannot see, 'sees' the truth as he gives Jesus the Messianic title 'Son of David' twice and because he 'sees' the truth with the eyes of faith he receives his sight and he follows Jesus on the way.<sup>2</sup> In Acts ὁδός is used seven times to refer to the following of Jesus and it is reasonable to suppose that the first readers of the gospel understood the word in that way.

It is perhaps surprising how few incidents of the healing of the deaf and dumb are recorded in the Synoptic Gospels. The healing of deafness is referred to in :-

Mark 7. 32-37 (no parallels). The healing of a deaf man with an impediment in his speech.

Mark 9. 25ff (no parallels). The healing of a child with a deaf and dumb spirit which is also, therefore, an exorcism.

1. As with the uses of 'Son of Man' in e.g. Mark 8.38, it is not clear that Jesus is referring to himself.

2. Mark 10.46 ff.

Matthew 11. 5 // Luke 7. 22 The response of Jesus to the disciples of John the Baptist, a quotation from Isaiah 35. 5-6

The references to the healing of the dumb are as follows :-

Mark 7. 37 The conclusion to the healing of the deaf man at Mark 7. 32-37

Mark 9. 17-25 The same story as the healing of the boy mentioned above.

Matthew 9. 32-33 A man possessed of a dumb spirit, whose healing is therefore an exorcism though this aspect is not stressed in the text // Luke 11. 4f.

Matthew 12. 22 A parallel of Matthew 9. 32-33

Matthew 15. 30-31 Crowds bring the dumb to be healed and are amazed at the healings.

Luke 1. 20 The dumbness imposed upon Zechariah for failing to believe the message of the angel; this is not strictly relevant but reveals the link between the organs of perception and communication and the state of belief and unbelief. e.g. Mark 9. 25f. and Mark 8. 21-30

Apart from the highly significant healing at Mark 7. 32-37, there are only two other accounts of particular healings, Mark 9. 25f. and Matthew 9. 32f. These and the general references to the healings of the deaf and dumb are in the form of exorcisms. The healing at Mark 7. 32-37 is the most certain account of a healing as the fulfilment of an Isaianic prophecy that one could find. The man is deaf and has an impediment in his speech which is described as *μυγίχλον. μυγίχλος* is an extremely rare adjective occurring only here and in the LXX version of Isaiah 35. 6 to translate *קִלְקַל*. The healing is presented in the terms of the Isaianic prophecy and is clearly intended to be a fulfilment

of it. The other references to dumbness use the adjective κωφός which is used both for being deaf and the concomitant affliction of dumbness, e.g. Matthew 9. 32f. Richardson's<sup>1</sup> additional conclusion from the story at Matthew 9. 32f. that καλῶς πάντα πεποίηκε is a reflection of the LXX version of Genesis 1. 31 πάντα ὅσα ἐποίησε καλὰ· λίαν and that Jesus is understood here to be the new creator seems to be stretching the point too far. The Matthean passage is not a quotation from the LXX.

While the healings of Jesus are clearly fulfilments of the Isaianic prophecies, especially Isaiah 61. 1-2, they are not simply the fulfilment of Isaianic prophecies. There is a strand in them which reflects the healing techniques common at the time. The most obvious Isaianic sign, the healing at Mark 7. 31-37, contains a typical example of this technique. Jesus touches the ears, places spittle on the tongue, and uses<sup>2</sup> the Aramaic word, 'ephphatha' - 'be opened'. This use of a formula reproduced in Aramaic occurs at one other point in Mark at Mark 5. 41 though not in the parallels. It has been argued that this use of Aramaic reveals Jesus as a wandering wonder-worker using set magical formulae which were so much part of the healing that they are preserved in the original Aramaic and in one case, Acts 9. 36ff. 'Tabitha arise', used by Paul.<sup>3</sup> The difference between ταλιθά κουμι and ταβειθά ἀνάστηθι<sup>4</sup> is explained by suggesting that Tabitha is a mispronunciation of 'talitha'. The use of these Aramaic transliterations to support the suggestion that Jesus was a wandering magician ignore the following considerations which fatally weaken the suggestion.

1. Richardson Miracles p.54 n.

2. For further comment on the use of spittle see Nineham p.204.

3. Nineham p.204, Morton Smith Jesus the Magician p.95.

4. It is worth noting that the verb is different, that the nouns are not very similar and that one of them is a proper name.



Firstly, there is no evidence that 'ταλιθα κουμι' is a magical formula. Secondly, the use of Aramaic by Jesus is not surprising since it was his native tongue. Thirdly, the preservation of Aramaic forms transliterated into Greek points not to magical formulae but to something else. Of the five words or phrases transliterated from Aramaic in Mark only two are healing words. 'Ephphatha' and 'Talitha cumi' are used in connection with healings. The other three uses have nothing to do with healings. The use of Aramaic may well be a literary device used by an author writing in Rome to add a touch of authenticity to his narrative. <sup>1</sup> Nineham's suggestion that they are magical formulae which must be preserved in their original form fails to account for the other uses of Aramaic though the subsequent use of 'Ephphatha' in connection with healings in the Church may well reflect a belief in the potency of the words in their original language. <sup>2</sup> Apart from the cry from the cross Aramaic is not used in the other Synoptic Gospels except at Matthew 5. 22 'πακα' and this points to the use of Aramaic being connected with the purpose of Mark's gospel rather than to any belief that Jesus was a magician using magic formulae.

The healings of Jesus are not proof of his divine nature although several of the Fathers referred to miracles as evidence of divinity. The healings and exorcisms could be, and were, attributed to the possession of a superior devil by Jesus. <sup>3</sup> In his defence to this accusation he shows that he was not the only exorcist known to them. For the same reason the healings and exorcisms are not signs that Jesus had exclusive access to supernatural power.

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1. Nineham pp.162, 204.

2.e.g. The Legend of Clothilde. Petits

Bollandistes 6.421.

3. Mark 3.22 and parallels.

They are understood to be the works of the Messiah and to those who see them and understand their significance they are a foretaste and a preaching of the Kingdom of God to which the response is repentance.

#### Exorcisms.

The exorcisms proper, (and, as has been pointed out, many of the healings are in the form of exorcisms,) are more especially signs that the Kingdom of God is at hand. The preaching of Jesus and the victory over the devil won by Jesus in the time of his temptations find their fruit in the exorcisms. Each exorcism is a confirmation of the victory over the devil in the temptations and a sign that the power of the Kingdom of God is forcing back the reign of the devil and the lord of this age. The contest between the Messiah and the Devil, which is seen in the exorcisms, is part of the apocalyptic world view which was so strong in the inter-testamental writings and which formed the background against which the Gospels were written. Jesus was at least partly understood to be an apocalyptic preacher within this tradition. He was also the principal actor in the apocalyptic vision.

' The earliest christology was not expressed in the cool identification of Jesus with the Logos as the rational principle of the universe, but in the fervid vision of the Son of Man breaking the power of demons and ushering in the new aeon with divine judgement and mercy. ' In this battle Jesus cast out the demons which were binding people. The healings which were understood as Isaianic signs were also sometimes understood as exorcisms. In the healing of the paralytic in Mark 2. 1-12 the inner alienation from God is healed - the sins are forgiven - and the physical alienation from God - the paralysis - is also healed.

1. Pelikan Catholic Tradition p.123.

In the Lucan account of the healing of Peter's wife's mother the fever is rebuked.<sup>1</sup> The woman who is bent double is possessed by a spirit.<sup>2</sup> The deaf and the dumb, as mentioned above, are possessed by deaf and dumb spirits.<sup>3</sup>

The exorcisms and healings contain certain features which are paralleled in the accounts of other healers.<sup>4</sup> This is not surprising. It was natural for the writers to present the healings and the exorcisms in forms that were familiar to their readers. It is clear, however, that for the early Church the miracles of Jesus were signs that the Kingdom of God had come in power and that in his Messiah, Jesus, the power of Satan is defeated.

#### The Raisings and the Nature Miracles.

The remaining miracles in the Synoptic tradition are the raisings from the dead, the great nature miracles and the feeding of the multitude. The final great miracle which is the consummation of all the miracles, and in the light of which the whole gospel narrative and the whole understanding of miracles is expressed, is the Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. This has the same significance for the New Testament that the Creation and the Exodus have for the Old Testament. It is the ultimate act of power and revelation in which all the forces of this present age are defeated. The significance of the Church's understanding of the Resurrection of Jesus will be examined below, as will the Virgin Birth.

#### The Raisings from the Dead.

The raisings of the Synoptic Gospels are not, as the healing miracles are, fulfilments of the main prophetic tradition of the Old Testament. Apart from Ezekiel 37 (c 593-563 BC) it is not until late in the prophetic tradition that raisings from the dead are prophesied.

1. Luke 4.39. 2. Luke 13.11.3. Mark 9.25.

4. See p.259 ff. Oesterreich Possession.  
p.147 ff.

The words of Ezekiel 37 probably refer to the restoration of Israel after the Exile rather than to the resurrection from the dead. In the Synoptic tradition Jesus is not proclaimed as 'the Resurrection' as he is in St. John's gospel, but he fills out the Isaianic prophecy in his reply to the disciples of John the Baptist at Luke 7. 22ff. by adding 'the dead are raised to life'. In a similar way 'raise the dead' is added to the charge to the disciples in Matthew 10. 8. Death, with all the other marks of this age, will be turned back by the *δυνάμεις* of God at work in his Messiah and in those to whom the Messiah gives his power.

The raisings from the dead are of great theological significance.. There are two, the raising of Jairus' daughter at Mark 5. 22ff. and parallels, and the raising of the widow's son at Luke 7. 11-17.

In the raising of Jairus' daughter the whole episode begins remarkably as Jairus falls at the feet of Jesus (cf the action of the centurion Cornelius in Acts 10. 25). The first readers of the Gospel would have known the significance of a Jewish official showing such profound reverence to a man who is thought by the Jewish authorities to be an imposter.<sup>1</sup> The girl is beyond earthly help; in Matthew 9. 18 this point is strengthened and the girl is said to be dead. The father comes to the source of divine power. There is no mention at this stage in the Marcan version that the girl is dead. The tension of the story is built up by the insertion of the episode of the woman whose illness has defeated the doctors.<sup>2</sup> She is healed by touching his clothing and she is sent away with a commendation for her faith. The news then comes that the daughter is dead and therefore, to those with no faith, beyond help (cf. the raising of Lazarus in John 11). The child is raised and

1. Nineham p.157.

2. See p.43 above.

the witnesses are overcome with amazement. The careful construction of the story presents Jesus as the one who has 'the key to give new life to the dead',<sup>1</sup> in Jewish tradition one of the three keys in the hand of God, and therefore reveals Jesus as the Messiah. He dismisses all those who demonstrate their lack of faith either by reporting that the girl is dead or by mourning her death. The parallels between this raising and the raising of Lazarus in John 11 as far as the effect and the necessity of faith are concerned are quite remarkable.

The raising of the widow's son at Nain (Mark 7. 11-17) is the most obvious of the miracles which reflects two of the miracles of the Old Testament, the raisings by Elijah and Elisha recorded at I Kings 17. 17-24, and at II Kings 4. 21-37.<sup>2</sup> Caird comments that this raising is an example of the law of uncleanness yielding to the law of mercy, referring to the prohibition of touching a dead body in Numbers 19. 11, and the same would be true of the raising of Jairus' daughter. This may be a valid point though not of such significance as the quotation from I Kings 17 which points to Jesus as the inheritor of the power of Elijah and Elisha although he is clearly understood to be greater than they. He is the one who is to come to whom John the Baptist, the type of Elijah, points.<sup>3</sup> It would be a mistake, however, to look for a tidy and consistent use of the Old Testament parallels especially from one gospel to another. There was no one consistent Christology in the Synoptic Gospels and Jesus could be seen as both the Messiah and in some sense also a successor of the great prophet Elijah.

The raising of Lazarus will be examined in the section on the Johannine miracles.

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1. Nineham p.160 n.2. Caird p.109.

The nature miracles of the Synoptic Gospels are also heavy with theological symbolism. The stilling of the storms are, as mentioned above, both exorcisms and signs that Jesus is the Lord of the waters.<sup>1</sup> The  $\text{E}^{\text{y}}\omega \text{ e}^{\text{i}}\mu\text{i}$  of Mark 6. 50 (and of John 6. 20) perhaps echoes of the name of God given in Exodus 3. 14 (  $\text{E}^{\text{y}}\omega \text{ e}^{\text{i}}\mu\text{i}$  I am who I am -  $\text{E}^{\text{y}}\omega \text{ e}^{\text{i}}\mu\text{i}$  in LXX).<sup>2</sup> The use in John certainly has Christological significance. The feeding miracles are even more complex. Their form is different from the healing miracles and they lack the response of amazement which is a feature of the healing miracles, the exorcisms and the raisings from the dead. Each gospel has an account of a feeding miracle; Mark and Matthew have two accounts. The references to the Old Testament and to the important symbols of Jewish eschatology and the life of the early Church are particularly significant.

- a). Jesus is the new Moses who gives bread/manna in the desert; cf Exodus 16 and Psalm 78. 23-29
- b). He is the new Elisha; cf II Kings 4. 42-44 and Luke 7. 11ff referred to above.<sup>3</sup>
- c). He is the host at the Messianic banquet which heralds the new age in Jewish eschatology.
- d). His actions pre-figure the Eucharist, the paschal feast of the early Church.

The Rabbinic belief that manna would be restored to the faithful at the coming of the Messiah adds more to the significance of the feeding miracle.

The cursing of the barren fig tree presents difficulties. It is the only cursing in the Gospels (but cf. Ananias and Sapphira, Acts 5;

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1. See p.26 above. 2. cf Mark 14.62  $\text{E}^{\text{y}}\omega \text{ e}^{\text{i}}\mu\text{i}$

3. See p. 62 above.

Simon Magus, Acts 8; Elymas, Acts 13:)). Although it appears in slightly different forms in Mark 11 and Matthew 21 the substance of the act is simple. Jesus observes a fig tree which bears no fruit, he curses it and it withers; on the next day in Mark and immediately in Matthew. Rawlinson comments that 'it approximates more closely than any other episode in Mark to the type of "unreasonable" miracle characteristic of the non-canonical Gospel literature.'<sup>1</sup> The miracle narrated in M.R. James in which the young Jesus fashioned birds out of clay which come alive and fly off when he is rebuked by Joseph for working on the Sabbath; is the sort of narrative he refers to.<sup>2</sup> Both Nineham<sup>3</sup> and Fenton<sup>4</sup> agree that the miracle was originally not an incident but a saying much like that at Luke 13. 8ff. In this saying the fig tree clearly means the house of Israel and refers to the judgement which will come upon Israel for its fruitlessness. Mark's explanation of the miracle by the reference to the necessity of faith in prayer (11. 20-25) scarcely makes sense. It may have been a prophetic act such as occurs in the Old Testament.<sup>5</sup> It is impossible to be certain. Its uniqueness in the Synoptic tradition makes it more likely that it is a saying narrated as an incident.

The explanations of cursing of the fig tree by Nineham and Fenton, which account adequately for the presence of this event in the Synoptic tradition, provide also the way of understanding the miraculous draft of fishes in Luke 5. 1-11. This is also probably an enacted saying although it presents none of the difficulties presented in the cursing of the fig tree. It gives dramatic form to the Marcan saying at 1. 17, and introduces Peter as the leader of the Apostles.

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1. Quoted Nineham p.298

2. Gospel of Thomas 2.3 ff. James p.49.

3. Nineham p.298.

4. Fenton p.335f.

5. Jeremiah 19.10 f.

An analysis of the distribution of the miracle stories of the Synoptic Gospels shows that the majority of the miracle stories emanate from the Marcan tradition.<sup>1</sup> If the miracle stories are classified in the way shown on the table below it will be seen that fourteen stories are common to all the first three Gospels of which three are straightforward exorcisms and two are nature miracles. There is one raising from the dead. Of the five miracles which occur in Mark and Matthew three are healings and two are nature miracles and the one miracle only in Luke and Mark is an exorcism. The miracle story exclusive to Mark is a healing; of the two exclusive to Matthew one is a healing and one is a nature miracle; of the three exclusive to Luke two are healings and one is a raising. Q contains only one miracle story, the healing of the Centurion's servant at Luke 7. 1-10 // Matthew 8. 5-13. There are general references to miracles in Q.

Those miracles which do not occur in Mark do not contain elements which point to a different Christology from the Marcan Christology. The Q miracle follows the large amount of Q material in the sermon on the mount/plain. Luke fills the story out to suit his main purpose of commending the Gospel to the Gentiles.

It is not possible to detect, from their treatment of the miraculous, any substantial differences in the Christologies of the Synoptic Gospels.

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1. P.72 below.



The Distribution of the Miracle Stories in the Synoptic Gospels

		<u>Exorcisms</u>	<u>Healings other</u> <u>than Exorcisms</u>	<u>Raisings</u>	<u>Nature</u> <u>Miracles</u>
<u>Miracles in all</u>					
<u>Gospels</u>	14-	3	8	1	2
<u>Mark and Matthew</u>	5-		3		2
<u>Mark and Luke</u>	1-	1			
<u>Q</u>	1-		1		
<u>Mark only</u>	1-		1		
<u>Matthew only</u>	2-		1		1
<u>Luke only</u>	3-		2	1	

### The Understanding of the Miraculous in the Acts of the Apostles.

The understanding of the miraculous in the second part of the book Luke - Acts does not differ substantially from the understanding in the first part of that book and is therefore in the straight line of development from the basically Markan, synoptic understanding of the miraculous. The ministry exercised by the Messiah is now exercised by the members of the Messianic community. The author does not depart from the main Jewish tradition of understanding the miraculous as a sign. Although the Apostles are occasionally described as if they were Hellenistic wonder-workers and although the miracles are often described as *τέρατα*,<sup>1</sup> we are in a different world from the miracle apologetic which is a feature of the apocryphal literature of the period and of some later Christian writing. The signs and wonders are the work of God. 'Luke's conception of the purpose of the miracles seems largely determined by the Old Testament.'<sup>2</sup>

The *δύναμις* of God which is with Jesus in Luke is now with his disciples. Just as God has anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit to defeat the powers of this age so the Church is anointed at Pentecost with the same Spirit for the same work.<sup>3</sup> Just as Jesus the prophet and Moses the prophet turn back the powers of this age by prophetic word and mighty action so now the Church bears the prophetic word and the *δύναμις* of God to continue his work. The *δύναμις* is mediated through the preaching of the name of Jesus. The preaching is accompanied by the signs and wonders and acts of power. The mighty works are part and parcel of the witness of the early Church to Jesus the Messiah.

1. eg. Acts 13.9 - 11, 28.1 - 6.

2. Moule Miracles p.167.

3. Acts 2.

When the two parts of the book are considered together it can be seen that the miracles in the second part are often conditioned in their form by the miracles in the first part or, in at least one case, a miracle in Luke looks forward to the events in Acts; the miraculous draught of fishes in Luke may be a pre-figuring of the missionary expansion of the early Church and the leadership of Peter in the early chapters of Acts.

Like the Synoptic miracles the miracles of Acts are understood to be the fulfilling of prophecy. The gift of the Spirit at Pentecost is understood to fulfil the prophecy of Joel.<sup>1</sup> The prophecy of Isaiah 61. 1-2 quoted at Luke 4. 18f. is fulfilled perhaps most spectacularly in the miracles of release from prison which occur in Acts.<sup>2</sup>

The healings at Acts 3. 6 and 8.7. fulfil the prophecy of Isaiah 35. 6 and bear a general resemblance to Jesus' healing of a cripple, to Peter's healing of Aeneas, and to Paul's later healing of a cripple at Lystra. The miracles of Acts generally resemble the miracles of Luke.<sup>3</sup>

The raisings of Tabitha and Eutychus clearly reflect the healing of Jairus' daughter. This shows the tendency to repeat the miracles of the first part of Acts in the second half. (cf. also the escapes from prison mentioned above.)<sup>4</sup>

The healings are signs that the power of God is at work and provide the occasion for the preaching of the word which together with the healings bring the people to glorify God. The Church's prayer in 4. 24-30 shows that the Church understands the miracles that occur in its ministry to be the works of Jesus accompanying the preaching of Jesus as the Messiah.

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1. Joel 2.28 - 32. 2. Acts 12.6 - 11.,  
16.25 ff. 3. & 4. pp 70 ff below.

' And now O Lord take note of their threats and help your servants to proclaim your message with all boldness by stretching out your hand to heal and to work miracles and marvels through the name of your holy servant Jesus. '

(4. 29-30)

There is also in Acts a development of the understanding of the way God acts. The word of judgement is accompanied by the visitation of a judging power (5. 1-11, 13. 6-12); and where in Luke 'seeing' the truth about Jesus is followed by the gift of sight, blindness to the truth about Jesus is followed by the curse of blindness in Acts.<sup>1</sup>

Luke's omission of the incident at Mark 6. 56, where the sick are brought out so that they may touch the edge of Jesus' clothes, is repaired by the inclusion of a parallel incident at Acts 5. 14-16.<sup>2</sup> The healing is extended to the shadow of Peter, though this does not occur in the Markan passage referring to Jesus. The power of Jesus in the person of Peter overshadows them and heals them. The use of ἐπισκιάζω (cf. 5. 15 ἐπισκιάσῃ, Luke 1, 35 ἐπισκιάσει, Luke 9. 34 ἐπισκιάσειεν ) indicates the presence of the divine power in Peter's presence.<sup>3</sup> The idea is even extended to the clothing and personal property of Paul which is carried to the sick to heal them, 19. 12. Indeed so powerful is the charisma of Paul that he needs only to have touched something for it to have healing properties.

The occurrence of miracles in Acts reflects the occurrence in the Old Testament. Just as at the main turning points of Israel's history the activity of God is seen to intensify and there is an increase in miracles, so at the turning points in the growth of the Church there is

1. Luke 18.35 ff., Acts 9.35 ff., 13.4ff.

2. See also pp 78 and 98 below.

3. cf. also its use at account of the Transfiguration which, as in the Sinai story, indicates the presence of God.

an increase in the incidence of miracles, e.g. Acts 2. 43, 14. 3. Just as the whole history of Israel is a miracle, so too the early Church understands its history to be the arena of God's saving activity. At each moment of persecution God gives the Church a new phase of expansion; 5. 42, 6. 7, 8. 1-8; the κοινωσία of the Church is the work of God and offences against it are offences against God; 2. 42-47, 5. 1-11.

The most obvious and perhaps the least significant development in the understanding of the miraculous in Acts is the widespread use of τέρας referred to above. The word means an intrinsically wonder-producing event and introduces an understanding of the miraculous which is absent from the main tradition of the Synoptic Gospels where τέρας is never used to describe a miracle. It soon becomes apparent, however, that the use of τέρας in Acts does not indicate a change in the understanding of the miraculous. No single event is described by the use of the word τέρας. The word is never used alone but always together with δύναμις and/or σημείον<sup>1</sup>; the phrase τέρατα καὶ σημεία becomes almost a formula to describe the events which accompany the Apostolic preaching. The long quotation from Joel in Acts 2 is expanded to include τέρας which does not occur in the LXX. The phrase is last used in the description of the events at Iconium at Acts 14. 3 on the first missionary journey of Paul and in the account of these events given by Paul and Barnabas at the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15.

The understanding of the miraculous in Acts is, as pointed out above, at one with the Synoptic understanding. Such development as there is in Acts seems to be more literary than substantial. Although

1. See p.80 below.

events such as the cursing of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5), the blinding of Elymas (Acts 13), and Paul's immunity from snake venom (Acts 28) are reminiscent of the tradition of Hellenistic wonder-workers the miracles in Acts are never mere wonders but acts of *δυνάμεις* which are *σημεία* of the presence and work of God in His Holy Spirit.

While not all the miracles are an integral part of the preaching, e.g. Acts 16. 16, we are in Acts in the same world as the Synoptic world and in a quite different world from the extra-canonical scriptures and the stories of wonder-workers.

The main purpose of the book is to demonstrate to the reader the divine initiative in the growth of the Church. Nothing can prevent the spread of the Gospel. Persecution is turned to good effect, prison walls are broken down and the prisoners are set free. The mission begun by Jesus the Messiah is continued in the Messianic community.

The miracles of the Acts showing the parallels between those in Acts 1-12, Acts 13 - end, and Luke; (or the Synoptic tradition).

<u>Miracles in</u> <u>Acts 1 - 12</u>	<u>Miracles in</u> <u>Acts 13 - 28</u>	<u>Miracles in Luke</u> <u>(or the Synoptic</u> <u>Tradition)</u>
2. 1ff. Pentecost		
3. 2ff. Healing of the cripple in the temple cf. Is 35. 6	14. 8-10 Healing of the cripple in Lystra	Luke 5. 17ff, 13. 10ff.
4. 31f. Visitation of the Holy Spirit after prayer cf. 2. 1ff. & Is. 6. 4 cf 10.44 f.		

Miracles inActs 1 - 12Miracles inActs 13 - 28Miracles in Luke(or the SynopticTradition)

5. 1-11 The death of Ananias & Sapphira		cf. Luke 12. 33 & Barnabas in Acts 4. 36-37
5. 12ff. Sick overshadowed by Peter	19. 11-12 Clothing touched by Paul heals	Mark 6. 56 cf. use of ἰπιοκιάζω in Luke 1. 35, 9. 34
5. 17ff. Release from prison cf. 12. 6-11 & Is. 61. 1 (7. 1ff The death of Stephen)	16. 25-34 Escape of Paul & Silas in Philippi	cf. Luke 4. 18-19  (cf. Luke 12. 11-12 & the Passion of Jesus)
8. 9-13 Philip's miracles overcome Simon Magus	13. 4-12 Paul & Barnabas overcome Elymas	
9. 3-9 Paul blinded for opposing Jesus	13. 4-12 Elymas blinded for opposition to Paul	Luke 18. 35-43 The blind beggar who 'sees' the truth receives his sight

9. 32-34 Peter heals Aeneas at Lydda	14. 8-10 see above	Luke 5. 17ff., 13. 10ff.
9. 36-42 Peter restores Tabitha to life	20. 9-12 Paul restores Eutychus to life	Luke 9 49ff. Jesus restores life to Jairus' daughter
10. 1ff. Peter's preaching brings down the Spirit on Cornelius, a centurion		Luke 7. 1ff. Jesus heals the centurion's slave
12. 6ff. Peter's release from prison	16. 25-34 see above	cf. Luke 4. 18-19 & Is. 61. 1
12. 20-23 Death of Herod		(cf. Antiochus Epiphanes 2. Macc. 9. 9 and Herod the Great. Jos: Ant: 17. 168-179)



Use of σημείον, δύναμις and τέρας in Acts (tr. Jerusalem Bible)

A		prodigia <sup>1</sup>	signa
Use of	2. 19	<u>portents</u> in heaven above and	<u>signs</u> on earth below
<u>τέρας</u>	2. 22	virtutibus prodigiis	signis
and		by the <u>miracles</u> , <u>portents</u> and	<u>signs</u> that God worked
<u>σημείον</u>	2. 43	the many <u>miracles</u> and	<u>signs</u> worked through the apostles
<u>δύναμις</u>	4. 30	to work <u>miracles</u> and	<u>marvels</u> through the name of
		your holy servant Jesus	
	5. 12	so many <u>signs</u> and	<u>wonders</u> were worked among the people
	6. 8	to work <u>miracles</u> and great	<u>signs</u> among the people
	7. 36	<u>miracles</u> and <u>signs</u> in Egypt	
	14. 3	allowing <u>signs</u> and	<u>wonders</u> to be performed by them
	15. 12	all the <u>signs</u> and	<u>wonders</u> God had worked
<u>τέρας</u>	translations underlined thus <u>portents</u>		
<u>σημείον</u>	translations underlined thus <u>signs</u>		
<u>δύναμις</u>	translations underlined thus <u>miracle</u>		

1. The words superimposed are from the Vulgate.

B σημειον other than those uses in A above

4. 16 a notable <sup>signum</sup> miracle  
.....
4. 22 this <sup>signum</sup> miracle of healing  
.....
8. 6 the <sup>signa</sup> miracles that he did  
.....
8. 13 <sup>signa et virtutes</sup> signs and miracles  
.....

C δυνამις other than those uses in A and B above

1. 8 <sup>virtutem</sup> power received from the Holy Spirit
3. 12 by our own <sup>virtute</sup> power
4. 7 by what <sup>virtute</sup> power ... have you done this
4. 33 witness to the Resurrection with great <sup>virtute</sup> power
6. 8 Stephen full of faith and <sup>fortitudine</sup> power
8. 10 Simon Magus, called the great <sup>virtus</sup> power of God
10. 38 Jesus anointed with <sup>virtute</sup> power by the Holy Spirit
19. 11 remarkable <sup>virtutes</sup> miracles worked by God at Paul's hands

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1. The words superimposed are from the  
Vulgate

### The Miraculous in St John.

At first sight it appears that the understanding of the miraculous in St John's Gospel differs radically from the Synoptic understanding. As both Marsh<sup>1</sup> and Barrett<sup>2</sup> observe, and as more radical scholars suggest, it is possible to see the Jesus of the Synoptic gospels as a thaumaturgist in the tradition of the 1st. Century, Middle Eastern thaumaturgy. The literary form of the Synoptic narratives may have been conditioned by the records of contemporary thaumaturgists. No such supposition could be made about the Johannine miracles. At first sight they are quite different from the Synoptic miracles. They are never called *δύναμις*. They are called either *σημείον* or *ἔργον*. The word *τεράς* is not used except in John 4. 48.

In the Synoptic Gospels the miracles are not always an integral part of the narrative. There existed a tradition, Q, in which only one miracle is recorded, although miracles are referred to more generally in Q. While it is clear that the miracles have Christological significance in the Synoptic Gospels it is possible for one major strand in the Gospels to make Christological statements with only one description of a miracle. The picture in John is completely different. The seven miracles<sup>3</sup> are themselves primary Christological statements. The miracles are *σημεία* which reveal the Christ and it is in the use of *σημείον* that a line of development from the miraculous tradition of the Synoptic Gospels and the Johannine miracles can be traced.

In the Synoptic Gospels signs are either a) signs that are asked for and will not be given, or b) signs that will reveal the end of the age and the coming of the Messiah.<sup>3</sup> In the first category (e.g. Mark 8. 11-12 and parallels) there is an identity of understanding between

1. Barrett St John p.62.

2. Marsh St John p.61.

3. p.56 ff. above.

the Synoptic Gospels and John (e.g. 2. 18, 4. 48, 6. 30). In this use of σημεῖον there is the understanding that miracles are not events that are performed to request or events performed to induce belief in an unbeliever. In the second category there is also an identity of understanding although the time-scale has changed. In the Synoptic Gospels signs are predicted at the end of the age, at the coming of the Messiah (e.g. Mark 13. 4, Luke 21. 11). In John the eschaton is brought into the present. Three of the seven miracles are called σημεῖον. σημεῖον is used eleven times to describe miracles in more general terms.

In John the miracles are eschatological signs brought into the present. The Messiah is present and glorified now. In the Synoptic Gospels the presence of the Messiah is accompanied by δόξα now and his coming in glory will be accompanied by σημεῖα in the future. The present and future Messiah are both present in the Johannine Christ, and the events which will accompany the Synoptic Christ when he comes in glory, σημεῖα, accompany the Johannine Christ now. In John the end of the Synoptic vision is brought into the main substance of the narrative. This has the effect of integrating the miracles more securely in the narrative. The understanding of the miraculous as the sign which can only be grasped in faith is developed in John but it is the development of an already existing understanding. The miracle in John is Jesus himself; he, not the bread, is the bread of life.

' "Our fathers had manna in the desert; as scripture says:

He gave them bread from heaven to eat."

Jesus answered:

"I tell you most solemnly

it was not Moses who gave you bread from heaven,

it is my Father who gives you bread from heaven,

the true bread;

for the bread of God

is that which comes down from heaven

and gives life to the world."

"Sir," they said "give us that bread always."

Jesus answered:

"I am the bread of life ...." '

John 6. 31-35

' The miracle is only understood if the "I am" which is presented in every miracle is understood. ' Conzelmann's comment sums up the Johannine understanding of the sign. The event can be witnessed but the sign may not be seen if faith is not present in the witness.<sup>2</sup> The work of God, the work that God wants, is believing on the one whom he has sent (John 6. 28). The essence of the work of God lies in faith and faith is the work of God. The importance of signs as wonderful events is secondary. Faith is primary.

' You believe because you have seen me. Happy are those who have not seen yet believe. ' (20. 29)

Those who do not believe without a sign are rebuked and signs are not given to those who ask. Even a man who sees a miracle can refuse faith. If the perception of the event as a sign depends on faith then the faith of the observer is necessary for the event to be a sign. The

1. Conzelmann New Testament p.346

2. cf. John 6.25 - 29.

sign must not only be given but also perceived if it is to be a revelatory event, that is a miracle. This understanding of the signs of Jesus and Jesus as the sign to be seen in faith can be found in the prologue of the Gospel. It is 'we', the 'we' of the community of faith, who saw the glory of the Word. The verb is in the first person -

ἑθεασάμεθα.

The consideration of faith as το ἔργον τοῦ Θεοῦ introduces the second word that John uses to describe the miraculous, i.e. ἔργον. The word has a broader meaning than σημεῖον, a breadth of meaning nearer that of δύναμις. It can mean an ordinary work or deed, or a deed which reveals the inner nature of the doer. It is also used to describe the work of the Father which may or may not be wonder-producing. As mentioned above believing on Jesus is the work of God.

The uses of ἔργον do not uniformly refer to the miraculous. (See Appendix to this section, page 91f). The word can also refer to the whole mission of Jesus which he has received from the Father and which is called the Father's work (4. 34 and 17. 4), the work, the accomplishment of which Jesus declares from the cross with the cry τέτέλεστο (John 20. 30).

The use of ἔργον at 10. 37 is the only occasion when the ἔργα of Jesus are unambiguously used to support the claim of Jesus that he is at one with the Father. The word takes its meaning from its use at 10. 32.

Jesus asks for which of the good works from the Father he is being threatened with stoning. The threat to stone him follows a period of

preaching and teaching. It would seem that these are the good works for which he is being threatened. The use is perhaps somewhat ambiguous and may perhaps be used to describe actions that are miraculous. The difficulty in pinning down the meaning of the word is that in John all the acts of Jesus are miraculous in the sense that they reveal the Christ to those who observe in faith, but not necessarily miraculous in the sense of extraordinary or wonder-producing acts.

We can observe in John a development of the characteristic of the miraculous observed in the Old Testament in which it is the function of an event as revealing the power and glory of God which makes it a miracle. σημεῖον translates  $\aleph \aleph$  in the LXX, the event which is a miracle because faith perceives in it the revelation of God. The σημεῖον is Jesus the Christ and he reveals the Father.

The σημεῖα of John can also be seen as commentaries on the σύναμις of the synoptic tradition or on the imagery of the synoptic tradition. They in turn provide the basis for lengthy sections of teaching which expound the substance of the miracle.

The seven signs recorded in John are -

- 1) The conversion of water into wine ( 2. 1-11). This is discussed with a sign which is not wonder-producing, the cleansing of the temple, in the discourse with Nicodemus in 3. 1-21. Jesus draws out the implication of the two signs. Note that 2. 23 and 3. 2 refer to signs although Jesus is only recorded as having performed one miracle. The changing of water into wine and the cleansing of the temple are both signs that Jesus is bringing in a new age.

- 2) The healing of the nobleman's son ( 4. 46-54). This is a variant of the healing of the centurion's servant at Luke 7. 1-10<sup>1</sup> and the healing of Jairus' daughter at Mark 5. 21ff. and parallels.
- 3) The healing of the sick man (5. 2-9). This is probably a variant on Mark 2. 1-12 and parallels. It is a further step in the growing conflict with the Jews in John. It is the first real occasion for conflict with Jews in the synoptic tradition. The language of John 5. 14-18 is reminiscent of the synoptic story (cf. also the similarity of Mark 2. 9 and John 5. 8).
- 4) The feeding of the five thousand (6. 4-13). This is a parallel with the synoptic miracle. Occurring as it does just after the Passover it is clearly connected with the Last Supper, (cf. 13. 1). The eucharistic significance of the miracle is expounded in 6. 22 ff.
- 5) Walking on the water. (6. 16-21). This is a parallel of the synoptic miracle at Mark 6. 45-51 and the Matthean parallel, echoing as they do Psalm 107. 29-30. The Lucan parallel has Jesus stilling the storm; Luke 8. 22 ff. and parallels in Matthew and Mark.<sup>1</sup> The Johannine reflections on this miracle may be at 14. 18, cf. also 16. 5-7, 16-22. (See also comment on ἰγὼ εἶμι on page 69 above and page 88 below).
- 6) The healing<sup>2</sup> of the man born blind (9. 1-7). This healing is a very close parallel to the healing of the blind man at Mark 8. 22ff. This has all the meaning that is to be seen in the synoptic accounts. John elaborates upon its meaning in the rest of chapter 9.
- 7) The raising of Lazarus (11. 1-44). The name and the general story may find its origin in Luke 16. 19ff. The plain meaning of the miracle is expounded in the course of the narrative of the miracle.

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1. There is no walking on the water in Luke.



' I am the resurrection.

If anyone believes in me, even though he dies  
he will live, and whoever lives and believes  
in me will never die.

Do you believe this. ' (John 11. 25-26)

In Jesus the end of the age has come. The Resurrection is not in the  
future. It is present in Jesus. He is the Resurrection.

John says that Jesus performed other signs and clearly includes  
detailed accounts of seven for their significance as Christological  
statements and as starting points for an exposition of the teaching of  
Jesus.

Jesus, in St John's gospel, is not so much a worker of miracles  
and bearer of the divine power but is rather himself the miracle, the  
ultimate sign and this is shown with great clarity as he reveals himself  
as the one who is who he is, ἵνα ἴμῃ (6. 20) (see the comment on  
page 69 above). The miraculous is Jesus and the signs are signs that  
he is present in his glory (John 2. 11). This is the understanding  
of the miraculous in this gospel. In Jesus the end of the age has come  
and in their encounter with him those who meet him meet judgement and  
the signs that he shows are the signs that the end of the age has come.

The use of  $\sigma\eta\mu\epsilon\iota\sigma\mu\epsilon\tau\alpha$  and  $\epsilon\pi\gamma\omicron\upsilon$  in St John's Gospel

Uses of $\sigma\eta\mu\epsilon\iota\sigma\mu\epsilon\tau\alpha$ (VULGATE)	Miracles- Specific Use	Miracles- General Use	Signs Asked For But Not Given
2. 11 (signorum) 2. 18 (signum)	Water into wine		What sign have you to show us
2. 23 (signa)		The signs that he did	
3. 2 (signa)		No man can do these signs	
4. 48 (signa et prodigia)			Unless you see signs and wonders
4. 54 (signum)	Healing of noble- man's son		
6. 2 (signa)		The signs done on the diseased	
6. 14 (signum)		The signs which he had done	
6. 26 (signa)		Not because you saw the signs	
6. 30 (signum)			What sign will you do - that we may believe you
7. 31 (signa)		Will he do more signs than this man	

9. 16(signa)		How can a man who is a sinner do such signs	
10. 41(signum)		John did no sign	
11. 47(signa)		This man performs many signs	
12. 18(signum)	Raising of Lazarus		
12. 37(signa)		He had done so many signs	
20. 30(signa)		Jesus did many other signs	

The uses of ἔργον

Uses of ἔργον	Ordinary Actions	Jesus' Actions	Miracles	The Father's Work The Mission of Jesus	Vulgate
3. 19	the evil deeds of men				opera
3. 20	evil deeds				opera
3. 21	good deeds				opera
4. 34	wrought in God			Jesus' food to accomplish the work of the Father	opus
5. 20			greater works than these that you may marvel		opera
5. 36(2)		the works which the Father has given me to complete, these very works bear witness - that the Father has sent me?			opera/ opera a)
6. 28 & 29				the work of God to believe in the one whom he has sent	opus

Uses of Σργον	Ordinary Actions	Jesus' Actions	Miracles	The Father's Work The Mission of Jesus	Vulgate
7. 3		...	? that your disciples may see your works?		opera a)
7. 7	the works of the world evil				opera
7. 21			the healing at 5. 2ff.		opus
8. 39	Abraham's works				opera
8. 41	the deeds of your father				opera
9. 3			the works of God made manifest in blind man		opera
9. 4			the works of God		opera
10. 25		...	? the works I do in my father's name ? bear witness to me		opera a)
10. 32		...	? I have shown you many good works ? from the Father		opera a)
10. 33		...	? good works ?		opere a)
10. 37		...	? the works of my Father		opera a)

Uses of ἔργον	Ordinary Actions	Jesus' Actions	Miracles	The Father's Work The Mission of Jesus	Vulgate
10. 38		... ...	? believe the works ?		operibus a)
14. 10		... ...	? the Father who dwells in me does the works?		opera a)
14. 11		... ...	? believe me for the works sake ?		opera a)
15. 24		... ...	? the works which no one else did ?		opera a)
17. 4				accomplished the work which thou gavest me to do  see comment on 4. 34 above	opus

The references marked a) are not clear as to the meaning of ἔργον ; either meaning is possible.

The references from 10. 32 - 10. 38 may be clearer; see my comment page 78 above; final paragraph.

The understanding of the miraculous in the Pauline epistles, the other epistles and the Apocalypse of John.

St Paul has very little to say about the miraculous in his letters and, so, very little to add to the understanding of the miraculous. He speaks in Romans 15. 19 of Christ doing mighty signs and wonders - *ἐν δυνάμει σημείων καὶ τεράτων* - in him in the power of the Spirit of God and in 2 Corinthians 12. 12 of 'signs, wonders and powers - *ἐν... σημείοις τε καὶ τέρασιν καὶ δυνάμεσιν* - being the signs - *σημεῖα* - of a true apostle'. He also speaks of the ability to work miracles - *ἄλλω δὲ ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων* - as one of the gifts of the spirit given within the Body (I Corinthians 12. 10, cf. 1 Cor. 12. 28. *ἔπειτα δυνάμεις* and *ἔπειτα χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων*) and mentions the working of miracles in the Church in Galatians 3. 5, (*ἐνεργῶν δυνάμεις*) in the argument against the value of the works of the law. In Romans 15 and 2 Corinthians 12 he uses phrases reminiscent of the phrases in Acts although the use in Acts may depend upon the use by Paul; *ἐν δυνάμει σημείων καὶ τεράτων ἐν δυνάμει πνεύματος* - Rom. 15. 19  
*ἐν... σημείοις τε καὶ τέρασιν καὶ δυνάμεσιν*  
2 Cor. 12. 12.

The word used in 2 Corinthians 12 and Galatians 3 is *δύναμις*

The two remaining uses of words referring to the miraculous in Paul 2 Thessalonians 2. 9 *ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει καὶ σημείοις καὶ τέρασιν ψεύδους* present the difficulty which has been encountered before that of deceptive miracles, deceptive signs and wonders in this case. To this is linked the question of the apologetic use of the miraculous and the presence in John's gospel of the tendency of the Jews to seek signs as

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 authentication of the claims of Jesus, a tendency that is understood to be a failure on their part to grasp the true nature of the mission of Jesus. This problem emerges again and again throughout the apologetic use of miracles in the Fathers (see below *εγ β 201f*). The miraculous is seen as a sign, almost an authentication, of the preaching and work of an apostle and yet at the same time these miraculous events can be deceptive. This ambivalence raises the question again; what characteristic of the miraculous shows it to be of divine origin? Clearly it is not its wonder-producing qualities since these can deceive and may, therefore, be of the devil or simply magic. It must therefore be the characteristic of bearing revelation. This definition itself causes difficulties which will be examined below. We can again, however, assert that it is the function of the miraculous as a bearer of revelation rather than its ability to cause wonder that shows its divine origin.

Of the remaining books of the New Testament only the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Apocalypse refer to the miraculous. Hebrews 2. 4, speaks of signs, miracles and portents.

σημείοις τε καὶ τέρασιν καὶ ποικίλαις δυνάμεσιν

as gifts of the Spirit which bear witness to the preaching of the Church, a reference very similar to the references in Romans 15 and 2 Corinthians 12 mentioned on page 94 above.

The references in the Apocalypse are unusual only because there are more references - four - 13. 13, 14, 16. 14, 19. 20 - to miracles performed by the beast or on his behalf or by demon spirits, than references to the miraculous as signs that the end of time is at hand, of which there are only three - 12. 1, 3, 15. 1. In the remainder of the New

1. e.g. John 2.18.cf. Mark 8.11 ff  
 and parallels.



Testament there are no explicit references to the miraculous. The concern of the writers is the discipline and life of the early Church and the exposition of doctrine. In this respect the New Testament writers (other than the evangelists) lead naturally into the concerns of the Apostolic fathers among whom, as we shall see below, questions of doctrine and church order were of prime importance. They show almost no interest in the miraculous. It is only among some of the extra-canonical scriptures that we find a really lively interest in the miraculous and when we examine them below we shall see that we are in a completely different world from the world of the canonical scriptures and the world of the early Church, a world more like that of some legendary fairy tale. It is easy to see why they were excluded from the canon of scripture. They are not, for this reason, unimportant in the subsequent development of the understanding of the miraculous. They are good examples of a genre of wonder-literature which is a recurrent element in Christian writing on miracles and therefore a recurrent, if rather bizarre, element in the way in which miracles are understood. Some of these writings will be examined below.<sup>1</sup>

It is sufficient to say here that the functionalist understanding of the miraculous is frequently completely submerged and ignored by the essentialist understanding and almost disappears completely.

The writers of the epistles and the Apocalypse add nothing of significance to the Synoptic and Johannine understanding of the miraculous.

1. See pp 256 ff below.

### The Virgin Birth and the Resurrection of Jesus.

These two miracles have a special place in the New Testament and the miracle of the Resurrection of Jesus is, as as we shall see, the fundamental corner-stone of the faith of the early Church. The understanding of these two miracles needs to be examined separately from the general understanding of the miraculous because of their fundamental importance to the belief of the early Church and because of their distinctive character of not having been observed in the same way that all other miracles were observed. Clearly the virginal conception of Jesus could not have been observed and the gospel accounts of the risen Jesus do not include an account of the actual rising.

The accounts of the virginal conception of Jesus are only found in the infancy narratives of St Matthew and St Luke (there are very few similarities between the accounts) although Mark 6. 3 (ὁ υἱὸς τῆς Μαρίας) and one reading of John 1. 13 (ἀλλ' ἐκ θεοῦ ἐγεννήθη )<sup>1</sup> may hint at belief in conception by the agency of God. In order to reach the meaning of these narratives for contemporary readers of the gospels it is not necessary at this point to examine either subsequent explanations for the origin of the narratives or subsequent dogmatic developments concerning the Virgin Mary. These matters will be examined below when relevant.

It will help us to understand the significance of these narratives however if we make a brief survey of some general aspects of them before suggesting how they were originally understood. No substantial examination will be made of the difficulties caused by some of the immediately adjacent gospel narratives, in particular the genealogies, although they

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1. See the comments on the variant

readings on p. 111 below.

are referred to in passing.

The passages under consideration are Matthew 1. 18-25, Luke 1. 26-38 and Luke 2. 1-7. We can see that these narratives are quite simple accounts of the birth of Jesus following conception by the Holy Spirit in a virgin called Mary whose betrothed was Joseph of the house of David, the news of the conception by the Holy Spirit and the name of the child being brought to Mary or Joseph by an angel. These are the only points which the narratives have in common. The accounts are quite brief and contain no sign that they are part of any polemic on the subject. They are simple statements of what happened; statements which agree on comparatively few points. The account in Matthew is particularly brief and clearly not written to answer any critical questions. It actually rather provokes such questions; e.g. who found that Mary was with child? How was the conception known to be "through the Holy Spirit" since it is not until later that Joseph is told that this is the case? Why does the author quote from the Septuagint text of Isaiah 7. 14 rather than from the Hebrew? If we step outside the limits of the narratives we are faced with further questions about the conflict with the genealogies, which take great trouble to show the descent of Jesus from Abraham in the case of Matthew and from Adam in the case of Luke. The statements that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit render the genealogies meaningless, except for establishing legal descent.

The narratives have no significant parallels in either Greek or Jewish literature. While there are several accounts of the conception

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1. Or more properly was believed to have happened.

of children by gods, accounts that are used by at least one apologist,<sup>1</sup> there are substantial differences between the gospel narratives and the Greek stories.

a) The Greek narratives are legendary in style and contain accounts of spectacular events,<sup>2</sup> e.g. Suetonius' account of the conception of Augustus with thunderbolts and snake.<sup>3</sup> The gospel accounts are very simple.

b) None of the conceptions in Greek mythology are conceptions by a virgin although the exaltation of virginity is a characteristic of Greek thought rather than of Hebrew thought.

c) In the Greek narratives the gods couple with mortals as individuals and in physical form. This is not the case in the gospel accounts of the conception of Jesus. Jesus is conceived by the Spirit. πνεῦμα is neuter and Πῦξ is feminine. The verbs used at Luke 1. 35;

ἐπιέρχεται, ἐπισκιάζειν denote non-material action and ἐπιέρχεται is never used of sexual intercourse in the LXX.<sup>4</sup>

d) While the narratives may be affected by the Greek tradition of the divine origin of heroes it must be noted that 1) Jesus is not a Greek divine hero but a completely Jewish person whose life and ministry only make sense in a Jewish context; and 2) the differences between the gospel narratives and the Greek stories are substantial. They are in no way comparable to each other.

The Old Testament parallels are almost equally inappropriate.

The accounts are of miraculous births because either age or barrenness has rendered conception impossible. There is no suggestion of virginal conception or of divine intervention except through the normal means of

1. Justin<sup>1</sup> apol. 21, 22.

2. Barrett Holy Spirit and the Gospel Tradition p. 6.

3. Suetonius August -  
us 94. 4. Barrett H.S.G.T. p. 7.

conception. Rabbinic literature understood God to be the third element in the conception of any child, e.g. Niddah 31 a 'There are three partners in the production of the human being: the Holy One, blessed be he, the father and the mother.'<sup>1</sup> Philo seems to believe in the possibility of virgin birth and seems to suggest that many of the remarkable births of the Old Testament are virgin births.<sup>2</sup> It is soon clear however that in his suggestion, for example, that Sarah conceived when she was alone (Abraham being absent in Genesis 21. 1) or that God opened the womb of Leah, (he refers also to Rebecca; Genesis 25. 21 and Zipporah; Exodus 2. 22) he is not so much referring to virginal conception or virginal birth but using a typically allegorical way of speaking of the divine origin of the human soul. These examples to which Philo refers are therefore not parallels to the divine conception in a virgin of the flesh and blood man Jesus of Nazareth. The one possible parallel at Genesis 6. 1ff., in which sons of God, members of the heavenly court, marry human women is more reminiscent of the Greek hero stories.<sup>3</sup> The account is a strange section isolated from the rest of the narrative. It may, however, have had some effect upon later thought. In 1 Enoch 106. 6, 12 Lamech suspects that the child born to his wife is not his son but the son of an angel, and in Protev. James 14. 1 Joseph, finding Mary pregnant, is afraid that her child is the seed of an angel.<sup>4</sup> Generally the idea of spiritual conception is repugnant to those who write about it.<sup>5</sup> It is thought of in the same way as the incident in the Acts of Thomas where a devil has intercourse with a woman for five years.<sup>6</sup>

Supernatural conception and birth are causes of horror and it is unlikely

1. Genesis Rabba 8.9.; Sotah ( Babylonian Talmud) 17a.

2. Philo. de Cherubim. 40 - 52.

3. Eichrodt. Old Testament vol.1. p195.

4. Protoevangelium of James 14.1. James. New Testament Apocrypha p.44.

5. Barrett. H.S.G.T. p.11.

6. Acts of Thomas 42.f. James. New Testament Apocrypha p.385.

that these and similar passages are the prototypes of the narrative of conception by the Holy Spirit.

It is argued that the origin of belief in the virginal conception of Jesus is to be found in the use by Matthew of the LXX version of Isaiah 7. 14 in which  $\eta\gamma\gamma\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\gamma$  = young woman is translated as  $\pi\alpha\rho\theta\epsilon\nu\omicron\varsigma$  = virgin; this mistake being taken together with the Rabbinic tradition mentioned above on page 100. It is suggested that the original narratives, undiscovered and presumably undiscoverable, make no mention of a miraculous conception and were re-written to satisfy the dogma of the early Church. The dogma is presumed to have developed from a Greek understanding and evaluation of the nature of man which would see a virginal conception by the Holy Spirit as more exalted and fitting than the Hebrew prototype; this development being reinforced by the use of the LXX version of Isaiah 7. 14.

The proposition that the use of the LXX version of Isaiah 7. 14 is an important factor in the development of a belief in the virginal conception and one of the reasons why the narratives were written does not stand up to very much examination. The following considerations fatally weaken the thesis;

a) The Matthean version which contains the prophecy from the Septuagint does not show any signs of being reworked to include a miraculous element into an otherwise simple unmiraculous birth narrative. The narrative would simply fall apart if the miraculous element was removed.

b) Matthew and Luke agree about the fundamentals of the conception story (see below page 98) and Luke makes no mention of or allusion to Isaiah 7. 14

1. e.g. Walker Is not this the Son of Joseph ?  
quoted in Barrett H.S.G.I.p.14

Caird's statement that Luke both refers to and uses Isaiah 7. 14 is not argued and seems hard to justify. /

c) The existence of a comparable story in Luke which is apparently uninfluenced by the Isaianic prophecy leads to the more likely proposition that Matthew supported an existing conception narrative by the use of the LXX version of the Isaianic prophecy. When this use of the prophecy is compared with the other uses of prophecy by Matthew it becomes more reasonable to suppose that Matthew chose the LXX version of the prophecy because it supported the narrative. For the reason suggested in a) above it does seem likely that the use of the prophecy followed rather than preceded the story. It would be untypical of Matthew to have been controlled in his narrative by this prophecy. His use of prophecies is particularly free, almost cavalier, and the selection of a particular translation to support a point would be typical of his use of prophecy.

Walker and Caird suggest that we come to the present narratives by the influence of Greek anthropology on a Hebrew original.<sup>2</sup> The 1) absence of infancy narratives from Mark and John, the 2) absence of the doctrine from the early apostolic preaching in Acts, the 3) supposed peripherality of the narratives mentioning virgin birth to the other infancy narrative of Luke and finally the 4) inconsistency between the belief in virginal conception and the implied teaching of Paul on the nature and significance of the incarnation (Galatians 4. 4, Romans 8. 3, 2 Corinthians 5. 21, Galatians 3. 13 and Philippians 2. 7) combined with the points made about the translation of עֲלֵמָה at Isaiah 7. 14 are brought in to support this suggestion. The suggestion that the present infancy narratives include the mention of virginal conception because of

1. Caird Luke p.31. 2.Walker op.cit. quoted Barrett H.S.G.T. p. 14. Caird Luke p. 51. See also Browne Messiah p.143 ff.

a reworking of a Hebrew original, for the reasons suggested above, presupposes two things of which there is no evidence. The first presupposition is that there is a Hebrew infancy narrative that is reworked. The Matthean infancy narrative consists of only 126 words of Greek and shows no signs of having been reworked. The narrative reads from beginning to end very simply and although there are difficulties in matching it with the genealogy the narrative is not out of tune with the rest of Matthew. Even the difficulty of marrying the genealogy to the conception narrative is not as significant as it seems. The problem is the careful tracing back of the line of Jesus through David to Abraham and negating the effect of this by the narrative of the virginal conception. It is, however, the genealogy that is more suspect than the conception narrative for it can be seen as part of the process by which Matthew sought to commend Jesus to his Jewish audience, as indeed Luke's genealogy seeks to commend Jesus to a Gentile audience by tracing the line of Jesus back to Adam. An original narrative, later reworked, in which the conception of Jesus was believed to involve, as Rabbinic teaching was that all conceptions involved, the action of God, would fit in better with the genealogy but again there is no sign of such reworking and the genealogy seems likely to be more conditioned than the conception narrative by apologetic considerations.

The second presupposition necessary to the suggestion that the original was reworked to comply with a dogmatic statement about the virginal conception of Jesus is that there is a belief of the early Church concerning the virginal conception of Jesus to which some unmiraculous infancy narrative is made to conform. No evidence for such a



pre-existing statement of belief exists. The origin of the belief is the gospel narrative. It is found nowhere else. It is a doctrine mentioned by only one of the Apostolic Fathers, Ignatius, for whom Jesus was 'both of Mary and of God' and therefore at once 'flesh and spirit'. Jesus 'was truly begotten of God and the Virgin', 'he was truly of the seed of David according to the flesh and Son of God according to the will and power of God.' This the first mention of the doctrine outside the New Testament. Its mention in Irenaeus will be dealt with below.

The argument further depends upon a degree of ignorance of Hebrew thought in the early Church so that such references as the Rabbinic references already mentioned would be misunderstood to refer to virgin birth and the Hebrew of Isaiah 7. 14 would be unknown. Hebrew thought was well understood and many members of the early Church were converts from Judaism and would have known that the Hebrew of Isaiah 7. 14 was perhaps not correctly translated as *παρθενος* in the Septuagint.<sup>2</sup> Irenaeus in defending the doctrine clearly shows that the alternative translation was known. It is significant in an age of intense theological debate and controversy there is very little controversy about this doctrine within the Church. Only a few opponents of belief in Jesus put forward the theory that he was born of the liaison of a Roman soldier Panthera (perhaps a misreading of *παρθενος*) and Mary.<sup>3</sup> There is no trace of a Judean original altered to suit Greek ideas of what is proper for the birth of the Christ. References to the virgin birth in extra-canonical scriptures tend to exaggerate the miracles concerning Mary

1. Ignatius. Eph.7.2.,18.2., Trall.9.1., Smyrn.1.1.

2. cf. Irenaeus.haer.3.21.

3. Origen.Cels.1.26 - 28.

Tertullian.de spec.30.

rather than reduce them. In comparison the narratives of Luke and Matthew are simple and unspectacular. We do not, in the conception and birth narratives, enter far into that legendary world which is not absent from other parts of either Matthew or Luke (e.g. the visit of the Magi or the appearance of the angels to the shepherds) and which is such a consistent part of the extra-canonical scriptures.

It requires far fewer unsupported suppositions in the chain of argument to say that in the narratives in Luke and Matthew we have the slight development of a tradition about the conception of Jesus that probably contained the following elements;

- a) Mary, a virgin;
- b) pregnant before coming to Joseph;
- c) the announcement of the conception by an angel,

- 1) after conception to Joseph in Matthew;

- 2) before conception to Mary in Luke, but it is worth noting that Luke frequently develops a simple passage to draw out every possible lesson, e.g. the Resurrection narratives in Luke.

- d) The naming of the child by the angel.

This tradition was of sufficient antiquity to gain wide acceptance in the Church without significant dispute even though the tradition does not easily fit in with some other parts of the gospel tradition.

It might be said finally that Luke was a sufficiently skilled story teller to use his material in an attractive and literary way to overcome any difficulties caused by the conception narratives. Luke - Acts is a very carefully constructed story. If the narrative of the

of the virginal conception had not had a secure and significant place in the tradition Luke would not have included it in such a way as to cause the difficulties that it does cause with the genealogy and some parts of the Markan tradition.

One further area of investigation exists before we can answer the relatively simple question about the way in which the virginal conception of Jesus was understood. This is the teaching on the work of the Holy Spirit which is implied in the conception narratives. We see in these narratives a clear understanding of the Holy Spirit working creatively on matter, that is, being itself creative. At this point the thought seems to show the influence of Greek philosophy but as Gunkel points out 'Judaism, descended from the Old Testament, could, it is rightly said, speak of miraculous begetting by a divine agent.'<sup>1</sup> The narratives contrive to hold together both Hellenistic and Palestinian concepts, a characteristic which is not surprising when we consider how closely Hellenistic and Palestinian thought and language are mixed in this period with the wide use of the Septuagint and the emergence of a Palestinian church into the intellectual world of Greece.

The belief that the Holy Spirit worked creatively on matter is a new development in the understanding of the working of the Holy Spirit. The creative activity of God through his Spirit or through his Word is mostly thought of as the shaping of a formless mass.<sup>2</sup> The biblical concept of the creativity of the Spirit was kept alive mostly in Hellenistic Judaism<sup>3</sup> and this adds to the Greek element in the narratives which speak of the conception of Jesus by the Holy Spirit.

The narratives are considered by Barrett to

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1. Gunkel Zum religionsgeschichtlichen Verstandis des N.T. p 67 f

quoted Barrett H.S.G.T p.23. 2. Gen.1.2., ps.104.30.,33.6.,147.18.,

See also p.33 ff above. 3.Barrett H.S.G.T.p.23.

be genuinely derived from the Old Testament by way of both Hellenistic and Palestinian Judaism.

' The fundamental thought involved in the conception stories in their bearing upon the work of the Holy Spirit is legitimately derived from Old Testament thought: the Spirit is Creator Spiritus in both creations. But, in the first century, the circumstances were such that this Old Testament doctrine thrived in a Hellenistic atmosphere, in which it was possible for other Hellenistic concepts also - for example, that of divine begetting - to flourish. ' 1

How was the miracle understood? Most simply it was understood as the beginning of the eschatological event that is the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus. (A subsidiary but important concern of the narratives, as of the rest of the New Testament e.g. John 1. 14, Gal 4. 4, Rom 1. 3, I John 4. 2, 2 John 7, is to emphasise the reality of the incarnation. Jesus was no docetic apparition.) As the whole event is the work of the Spirit so it is initiated by God in his Holy Spirit. Conception by the Spirit is the sign of the inauguration of the defeat of this age and the arrival of the age to come.

Matthew in his use of γενέσεως and γέννησις (γένεσις in some readings) indicates the new beginning, a new book of Genesis. This is the event to which the prophets have looked forward. The name the child is given means 'Yahweh saves', the new Joshua who brings his people to their promised land. Although the virginal conception is unique it can be seen as the climax of the miraculous intervention of

1. Barrett H.S.G.I. p.23

the Holy Spirit in the birth of great men in Israel's history. The fore-runner of Jesus is born naturally but his birth is announced by an angel and is miraculous as far as birth to the barren Elizabeth is concerned. The existence of accounts of conception as a result of union with a divine being in Greek literature is part of this Greek tradition. This supposition might, in turn, lead to the conclusion that the conception narratives represent the intrusion of a pagan Greek tradition into a Hebrew tradition (see page 102 above). The conception by the Holy Spirit is more properly understood as the last in a Hebrew tradition of creative intervention by God in the conception of heroes of Israel. At least the Hebrew tradition of creative intervention in conception of heroes shows that conception by divine agency is not only found in Greek literature.

The Holy Spirit which creatively caused the conception of Jesus is, in Luke, also the agent of all occurrences of recognition and prophecy which follow his birth, in the new age which God inaugurates by his conception and birth. The new age is proclaimed in the Magnificat (Luke 1. 46-55) the Benedictus (Luke 1. 68-79) and the Nunc Dimittis (Luke 2. 29-32).

The new dawn has broken. (1. 78 cf. Mal 4. 2)

God has visited his people with redemption (1. 68)

He has helped his servant Israel (1. 54)

His salvation has been seen by human eyes. (2. 30)

The virginal conception and birth was God's great act to bring in the Messianic age. As only God can initiate the new age which will redeem the past, the agent of the redemption must originate in the

creative initiative of God.

The doctrine did not form part of the original apostolic preaching as we can recover it from the Pauline epistles and the Acts of the Apostles. (Incidentally the absence of this doctrine from the preaching of the apostles in Acts is perhaps the most telling argument that this preaching is substantially and authentically reproduced in Acts since Luke, whose conception narratives are the more developed, could easily have included the doctrine in the apostolic preaching.) We may perhaps also conclude that the tradition of the virginal conception of Jesus was, like the tradition of the empty tomb, sufficiently secure not to need strengthening by its inclusion in the apostolic preaching. Such arguing from silence is not always, however, very convincing.

Inevitably a priori considerations tend to influence the way in which the place of the virginal conception of Jesus in the belief of the early Church is assessed. It must be said, however, that the ingenuity of the arguments brought to demonstrate either that the origin of the doctrine is based upon a mistake or that it slipped late into the tradition are perhaps the strongest cause for suspicion as to their validity.

The Lucan account of the conception of Jesus points to one further, very important understanding of the doctrine; that is the christological and, when developed, the soteriological understanding of the doctrine.

' The Holy Spirit will come upon you  
and the power of the most High will  
overshadow you;  
therefore the child to be born will be called the  
Son of God. ' Luke 1. 35

The word 'therefore' (  $\delta\iota\omicron$  ) indicates a causal relationship between the conception by the Holy Spirit,<sup>1</sup> the power of the most High, and the divine sonship of Jesus. This relationship is not examined or elaborated in the rest of Luke - Acts or in the rest of the New Testament. Nor does Ignatius, the only one of the apostolic Fathers to refer to the virgin birth, draw out the implications of the text to any significant degree. (See page 104 above).

For some time the doctrine was simply received as part of the biblical tradition. It was not, in von Campenhausen's view<sup>2</sup>, formulated for the sake of a theological line of thought.

The baptism of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels can be considered as an affirmation or elaboration of the divine sonship of Jesus, particularly in Mark which has no infancy narrative. The basic form of the infancy narrative and the baptism narrative are probably not however, best understood as two comparable statements about the divine sonship of Jesus. Although this appears to be the case in Luke.

' The child that will be born will be called the Son of God '

' And a voice came from heaven "You are my son the Beloved;  
my favour rests on you. '

The relationship depends upon interpreting the use of 'son' in Luke 3. 22 in the same sense as in 1. 35.

The words of the baptism bear a different meaning and do not refer to divine sonship in the sense that the infancy narrative in Luke refers to it. The anointing with the Spirit combined with the use of a quotation from the Enthronement Psalm 2. 7 and a quotation from the Suffering

1. cf. Irenaeus haer. 5.1.3.

2. von Campenhausen Virgin Birth p 24

Servant Song of Isaiah 42. 1 point to his entry into the messianic redemptive office as the messianic successor of David. It is sonship as Messiah not sonship as divine Son that is affirmed in the baptism narrative<sup>1</sup> and Luke's version which differs in no significant respect from Mark's version should be understood in the same way as Mark's.

Subsequent interpretation and reflection upon the doctrine caused some conflict as the doctrine became part of the systematic study of Christology. The use of the alternative readings of John 1. 13 and the comments upon the text were weapons in the hands of some of the Fathers in Christological disputes.

' who were born, not of the ... will of man,

but of God. ' John 1. 13

Some readings read  $\text{οἱ ἐγεννήθησαν}$  as  $\text{ὁ ἐγεννήθη}$ , that is in the singular, a reading we find in the Jerusalem Bible e.g.,

' who was born not out of human stock ...

but of God himself. '

This reading only occurs in the old Latin text 'b' and some Syriac texts.

*non natus esse<sup>2</sup>, ἐγεννήθη<sup>3</sup>*

Irenaeus and Tertullian consistently used the singular reading and naturally took it to refer to the virginal conception of Jesus.<sup>4</sup>

' And for this reason (i.e. that in the first times God created Adam) in the last times, not by the will of the flesh nor by the will of man, but by the good pleasure of the Father, his hands formed a living man, in order that Adam might be created (again) after the image and likeness of God. '<sup>5</sup>

1. Barrett H.S.G.T. p.29 cf. Just, dial, 8. 2. Pelikan The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition p.288. it<sup>b</sup>, Ir<sup>lāf</sup>, Tert. etc. 3. sy<sup>cvid</sup> For full details of the variant readings see p.320 The Greek New Testament United Bible Societies 2nd edn. 4. Iren. haer 3.16.2. 3.19.2., Tert. de carne Christi 19,24 for example. Jerome (Jovin. 2.29) and Leo the Great (epp. 16.7, 31.3., serm. 27.5., 28.2., 67.6.) both take the plural readings. 5. Iren. haer. 5.1.3.



Tertullian said that the plural reading was a Gnostic misreading of the passage and that the passage proved that Christ was the Logos made flesh and that as flesh 'he is born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of man' because he was born of the virgin.<sup>1</sup> Clement, Strom. II.

xiii.582 and Origen, Matthew (Latin) 12; John, Fragment 8 have the plural reading. Barrett's comment on John 1. 13 is worth noting:

' In place of the plural (οἱ... ἱγινώθησαν ) the singular (qui ... natus est) is read by b Irenaeus (lat.) Tertullian. This combination of early Western authorities is strong, but not strong enough to overthrow the plural reading, which is demanded by τοῖς πιστεύουσιν in the previous verse, and by the sense of the passage. The origin of the text of b is readily understandable; the threefold negation (not of blood, nor of the will of flesh, nor of the will of a husband) seemed to correspond exactly with the Church's belief about the birth of Jesus, and since the Virgin Birth is nowhere expressly mentioned in John it was natural to introduce a reference to it here. The reading which refers explicitly to the birth of Jesus is to be rejected; but it remains probable that John was alluding to Jesus' birth, and declaring that the birth of Christians, being bloodless and rooted in God's will alone, followed the pattern of the birth of Christ himself. It is unnecessary to suppose (with Torrey, 151, 153)<sup>2</sup> that explicit reference to the Virgin Birth has been lost through faulty translation of Aramaic. See M. ii, 436. '<sup>3</sup>

The connection between the virginal conception of Jesus and his holiness and divine nature was reflected in what was, to start with, an eschatological stress on the value of celibacy which developed to an exaltation of celibacy for its own sake. Tertullian after he became a

1. Tert. de carne Christi. 19.2., 24.2.

2. Torrey. Our Translated Gospels. pp. 151, 153 quoted Barrett. St John.

3. Barrett. St John p. 137 f. M. ii = Grammar of the New Testament vol. 2 by J. H. Moulton and W. F. Howard, 1929.

Montanist developed the argument to an extreme point. For him 'marriage and fornication are different because laws appear to make them so; they are not intrinsically different, but only in the degree of their illegitimacy.'<sup>1</sup> Most patristic asceticism, developed from the doctrine of the relationship between the virginal conception of Jesus and his holiness (and the ever present Greek tendency to give an inferior place to anything to do with the flesh), was much less extreme in its exaltation of virginity.

Jerome, who incidentally read John 1. 13 as 'nati sunt', believed that celibacy was the sine qua non of holiness. '... all those who have not remained virgins following the pattern of the perfect chastity of the angels and that of our Lord Jesus Christ himself are polluted.'<sup>2</sup> The only value of marriage was the production of virgins.

This development brought with it the belief that original sin was sexually transmitted. This finds an advocate in Jerome's contemporary and Augustine's mentor Ambrose who states the belief in this way;

'Even though he assumed the very substance of this natural flesh, he was not conceived in iniquity nor born in sin. He who was not born of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of the Holy Spirit of a virgin.'<sup>3</sup> The proof texts used by Ambrose that showed that Jesus had to be born of a virgin to be free from sin were Psalm 51.5;

'Behold I was brought forth in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me.' and the Vulgate of Isaiah 53. 8

'generationem eius quis enarrabit?'

Augustine's comment on the Psalm was that since these words were spoken

1. Tert.castit.9. 2. Jerome Jovin.1.40. 3. Ambrose ps.37.5.

by David 'who was thought of as more righteous than others' then Christ was called truly righteous for no other reason than that 'as one born of a virgin he was not bound in any way by the ordinances against a guilty way of having been conceived.' <sup>1</sup>

The virginal conception and birth of Jesus was necessary if he was to be sinless since the normal act of conception was the way in which man's natural taint of sin was transmitted. Augustine takes the point to its logical conclusion that since all men normally conceived were partakers in the original sin of men, that is, were in the state of original sin, then only the virginally conceived and sinless Christ could redeem fallen man.

' That one sin, however, committed in a setting of such great happiness, was itself so great that by it, in one man, the whole human race was originally and, so to say, radically condemned. It cannot be pardoned and washed away except through "the one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim 2. 5) who alone could be born in such a way as not to need to be reborn.' <sup>2</sup>

By the time of Augustine the conception and birth narratives of Luke and Matthew and the reference at John 1. 13 had developed considerably from their original context and understanding which had been strongly influenced by the over-riding eschatological concern of the 1st. C. A.D.. They now had a central part in a closely argued thesis concerning the transmission of the state of original sin by means of normal human conception. This thesis had extensive effects in the ascetical theology of the early Church and particularly in the Western Church. An examination of the other theological developments of this

1. Augustine Pelag. 4.29 (11)

2. Augustine enchir. 14.48

thesis especially in the theories of salvation that formed the subject of so much debate in the 16th. and 17th. century is, unfortunately, well beyond the scope of this study.

In this matter, as in so many other areas of theology, Augustine developed the understanding to a point beyond which little substantial development took place for a long time. By its place in Augustine's theology the doctrine of the Virgin Birth of Jesus assumed an importance which was not immediately obvious in the traditions which found their place in the early narratives of Matthew and Luke or in the thinking of the rest of the New Testament or in the writings of the earliest Fathers of the Church.

### The Resurrection.

When we come to examine the understanding of the miracle of the Resurrection we are faced with a miracle unlike any other in the New Testament in that it is central to the whole message of the New Testament in the same way that the Exodus is central to the earlier part of the Old Testament. It is possible to imagine gospel narratives which do not include miracles; the source Q has only one specific miracle recorded. It is quite inconceivable that there could be any New Testament at all or any Church to give birth to it without the Resurrection of Jesus. It is distinctive also because it was not witnessed, although its results were, and that the miracle is not the act of Jesus or of his disciples but the act of God on the dead body of Jesus. It also demonstrates to the full both of the aspects of the miraculous that we have noticed before. In some accounts the risen Lord goes unrecognised until the moment in which he reveals himself. Again, in some accounts the risen Lord is greeted with wonder, fear and amazement. The risen Lord remains unrecognised by Mary Magdalene until he speaks her name, ( John 20.16); and is not recognised by the two disciples on the way to Emmaus until he reveals himself in the breaking of the bread, ( Luke 24. 31 - 32). \*On the other hand the appearance in Matthew 28.9 is immediately recognised by the women who react with awe and joy. The account in Mark 16.9 is also straightforward. Jesus is recognised and his rising reported.

It is immediately apparent, and in respect of the event which is so fundamentally important to the New Testament and the Church perhaps surprising, that there are several intermingled understandings of the

1. The virginal conception of Jesus was not witnessed either, of course, and could not have been. The resurrection could have been witnessed. A purported eye - witness account is to be found in the Gospel of Peter.

nature of the Resurrection with the late Markan ending carrying the complexity of the Synoptic understanding of the Resurrection late into the 2nd. century<sup>1</sup> when the Church's belief concerning the Resurrection was expressed in a statement that Jesus had risen from the dead and ascended into heaven. As early as the first epistle of Clement there is a simple statement that God 'has rendered the Lord Jesus Christ the first fruits by raising him from the dead.'<sup>2</sup> As we shall see below the later patristic treatment of the Resurrection was a little more complicated than this simple statement but very few of the complexities in the gospel narratives found their way into the thinking of the early Church.

A brief analysis of the four accounts soon reveals the complexity of understanding.

Mark A i.e. Mark 16. 1 - 8

Mark A has no account of a Resurrection appearance. The empty tomb is found by Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome on the first day of the week. A young man dressed in a white robe (an angel?) reports that Jesus has risen and gone into Galilee. The women flee in terror.

We have straight away the only common elements in the four narratives.

- a) Early on the first day of the week.
- b) Mary of Magdala (Sometimes with others and alone in John. Mary of Magdala occurs in each gospel. She is the only common feature of the lists of those who first witnessed the Resurrection.)
- c) went to the tomb and discovered the stone sealing the entrance moved

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1. Nineham Mark p.450. 2.1 Clement 24.

d) and the tomb empty.

In the Synoptic gospels the presence of one/two angels/young men dressed in white are reported. In Matthew the angel descends from heaven after a violent earthquake and moves the stone blocking the entrance to the tomb.

There is a difference about the location of the appearances. Mark B, Luke, Matthew 28. 9, and John 20. 1 - 13 record, specifically or by implication, a Judean appearance. Although a Galilean appearance is predicted at Mark A 16. 7, the appearance at Mark B 16. 9, looks very like a Judean appearance. It is an appearance to Mary of Magdala, the first appearance, near to the place of burial i.e. near Jerusalem. This is not surprising however since there is no real relationship between Mark A and Mark B. Matthew 28. 16, and John 21 record Galilean appearances. Whether there are separate Judean and Galilean traditions or a Judean - Galilean tradition the first part only of which is recorded in Mark B and Luke does not affect the matter of understanding of the Resurrection materially. In Matthew the order of the risen Lord to his disciples while he was in Judea, that they should go to Galilee, is obeyed and is followed, after a short section of anti-Jewish apologetic, by the incidents in Galilee. The quickness of the journey from Judea to Galilee might be thought to convey something about the nature of the risen body except for the fact that Matthew records that the disciples also move quickly to Galilee. The juxtaposition of the Judean and Galilean appearances most probably stems from the Synoptic writers' carelessness over time and geography, e.g. Mark 7. 31. The two locations of appearance in John may result from a later editorial edition.

The gospel seems to end at 20. 31 and chapter 21, which contains the Galilean appearance, certainly looks like a later addition.

### The Nature of the Appearances.

Mark A has no appearances. Mark B is a late document, ( 180 A.D.)<sup>1</sup> and, as will be seen below, is dependent upon Matthew and Luke.

Matthew. This is the least complex of the Resurrection appearances. The women come to the tomb and are met by an angel who has rolled back the stone. They do not enter the tomb and there is no record of an empty tomb. The angel tells the women that Jesus has risen from the dead and is going ahead of them to Galilee. As the women run away from the tomb to tell the disciples of the angel's message they meet Jesus and clasp his feet. He tells them to go to his brothers to tell them to go into Galilee where he will meet them. After a short section of anti-Jewish apologetic the narrative moves to Galilee for the second appearance, this time to the disciples. Some of them doubt the reality of the appearance. The narrative closes with the missionary charge. The element of doubt or of inability to recognise the risen Lord is common to all the gospels except Mark A which has no appearance; (Luke 24. 11, the whole of the incident of the Emmaus road, and 24. 37; John 20. 24 - 25 and Mark B 16. 14.).

Luke. Luke follows Mark A over the finding the empty tomb (there is no mention of an empty tomb in Matthew although it is implied,) and Matthew over the presence of the figures who tell them that Jesus is risen. At this point a Petrine tradition enters the narrative in Luke and John. In both Peter goes to the tomb and finds it empty; after

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1. Nineham Mark p.450.



the women in Luke 24. 12<sup>1</sup> and before the women and the other disciple in John 20. 6, or perhaps after Mary Magdalene. The narrative of John 20. 1 - 2 is not clear. At the conclusion of the Emmaus episode the eleven in Jerusalem report to the two disciples that the Lord has risen and appeared to Simon. It is not clear if Peter is the first to see the risen Lord but the indication is that he is. Certainly no mention of a first appearance to Mary Magdalene is made in Luke. Jesus then appears unrecognised to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus and then to the disciples in Jerusalem. Neither of these appearances are as simple as the appearance in Matthew.

In Luke 24. 13 - 35 Jesus, presumably a well-known and much loved figure, walks and talks with two disciples for some time and is not recognised by them until he repeats the actions of the Last Supper. They then recognise him and he disappears from them, literally became invisible from them; ( Καὶ αὐτὸς ἀφάντος ἐγένετο ἀπ' αὐτῶν Luke 24. 31). It is recorded as a disappearance and not a going away.

The appearance to the disciples in Jerusalem is also unusual. 'Jesus himself stood among them.' The suddenness of the appearance which this phrase implies, together with the fear that he is a ghost that they experience, ( Πτοηθέντες δὲ καὶ ἐμφοβοὶ γενομένοι ἐδοκίμουν πνεύμα θεορῆν<sup>2</sup> ) indicates that Jesus did not appear to them to be the same Jesus that they had known before the crucifixion. On both occasions some action or evidence is needed to open their eyes to the fact that it is Jesus. The narrative then goes on, almost in reaction to the earlier part of the narrative, to emphasise

1. This is not to be found in all the readings of Luke 24 p.314 United Bible Society 2nd edn. Greek N.T.

2. An alternative explanation of the fear may be shock and surprise at seeing one who has died but it does not explain the force of πτοηθέντες and ἐμφοβοί.

the solidity and the reality of the risen Lord. Jesus points to the wounds that he received at the crucifixion, the solidity of his flesh and the fact that he can eat broiled fish. The appearance finishes with the only account of the Ascension. We find this uncertainty of appearance and anti-docetic comment also in John.

John. Mary arrives at the tomb but does not enter. Peter enters first and is followed by John. Two angels ask Mary why she is crying. She sees Jesus but does not recognise him until he speaks her name. Jesus then appears to the disciples (cf. Luke 24. 36). He demonstrates his identity with the one who was crucified; this point is made again in the encounter with Thomas eight days later.

The second ending to John, the fishing episode, (cf. Luke 5. 1 - 11) begins with the failure of the disciples to recognise Jesus until he orders them to throw in the net again. John then includes, in a different context, the bread-breaking and fish-eating of Luke. The uncertainty of the appearance is followed by a passage which stresses the material nature of our Lord's appearance. (John 21. 12 - 13 cf. Luke 24. 39 - 43). The second ending in no way follows on from the preceding passages and, with its repetition of the failure to recognise, seems to come from a source other than the sources of the earlier ending. The subject of the relationship between this and other parts of John to parts of Luke is beyond the scope of this study, but it may be said that the later Johannine ending seems to be a reworking of various parts of Luke's Gospel, as indeed the earlier ending seems to contain material derived from Luke.<sup>1</sup> Mark B also clearly depends upon Luke.

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1. See p. 123 below.

Mark B contains nothing new. This is most probably a 2nd. century addition to the Gospel.<sup>1</sup> From the table below it can be seen that Mark B is heavily dependent on Luke.<sup>2</sup>

### Conclusion

It is clear that there are two traditions defined not so much by location as by the nature of the appearance and the significance of Peter. The Matthean tradition has a very simple appearance and gives no mention of Peter. The Lucan/Johannine tradition has a more complex account of the appearances and gives an important place to Peter. Both traditions give an important place to the missionary charge; they also share the common features mentioned above.

Matthew reveals no experience except that the Jesus who was known before the crucifixion has risen. There is only one mention of doubt in a very short narrative; 28. 17. The nature of the doubt is not clear. The section of directly anti-Jewish apologetic is to be found only in Matthew (27. 62 - 66; 28. 11 - 15).

The Lucan/Johannine appearances are less certain than the appearance in Matthew. Jesus is only recognised after an identifying action or word. This tradition accompanies the account of the more ambiguous appearances with strongly anti-docetic elements as though the ambiguity of the appearances must be countered by a denial that they were mere appearances and an assertion that the Lord who was crucified is materially identified with the one who has risen. In Mark B we find the same uncertainty of appearance without the anti-docetic element that occurs in Luke and John. It is perhaps surprising that we find this uncertainty of appearance in a document dating from

1. Nineham Mark p.450. 2. See p. 125  
below

about 180 A.D. when, as we shall see, the patristic understanding had become much simpler, at least in the West.

Table A The parallels between the Johannine and Lucan appearances.

<u>John</u>	<u>Luke</u>
20. 19ff Jesus came and stood among them. He said to them 'peace be with you' and showed them his hands and his side.	24. 36ff Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you' ... 'Look at my hands and feet; yes it is I indeed. Touch me and see for yourselves. A ghost has no flesh and bones as you can see I have'.
20. 26ff Jesus came in and stood among them. 'Peace be with you' he said. Then he spoke to Thomas 'Put your finger here; look, here are my hands. Give me your hand, put it into my side.'	<u>Parallel passages</u>
21. 4 It was light by now and there stood Jesus on the shore, though the disciples did not recognise that it was Jesus.	24. 15-16 ... Jesus came up and walked by their side; but something prevented them from recognising him. <u>Failure to recognise</u>
21. 5-6 Jesus called out, 'Have you caught anything friends?' And when they answered, 'No', he said, 'Throw the net out to starboard and you'll find something'. So they dropped	5. 4-6 When he had finished speaking he said to Simon, 'Put out into deep water and pay out your nets for a catch'. 'Master; Simon replied, 'We worked hard all night long and caught nothing, but if you say so I will <u>Parallel (but not both res-</u>

the net, and there were so many fish that they could not haul it in.

Followed in verses 15-20 by the reinstatement of Peter and his commissioning as the leader of the Church.

21. 9-10 As soon as they came ashore they saw that there was some bread there, and a charcoal fire with fish cooking on it. Jesus said 'Bring some of the fish you have just caught'.

See 21.4.

for non - recognition,

21. 12-14 None of the disciples was bold enough to ask, 'Who are you?'; they knew quite well it was the Lord. Jesus then stepped forward, took the bread and gave it to them, and the same with the fish.

pay out the nets'. And when urrection) they had done this they netted passages such a large number of fish that their nets began to tear.

Followed in verses 8-10 by Peter's confession of sin and commissioning as leader of the Church's mission.

24. 41-43 Their joy was so great that they still could not believe it, and they stood there dumbfounded; so he said Failure to them, 'Have you anything to to recog- nise - piece of grilled fish, which Eating he took and ate before their fish - eyes. Giving

24. 30-31 He took bread and bread broke it and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognised him.

Table B      The parallels between the Lucan  
                         and Markan B appearances

<u>Mark B</u>	<u>Luke</u>	<u>Matthew</u>
16. 9-11	24. 9-11	
16. 12	24. 13-33	
16. 14	24. 36-43	
16. 15-16	24. 45-49    and	28. 18
16. 19-20	24. 50	

### The Pauline Understanding of the Resurrection

The synoptic accounts of the Resurrection are not the earliest accounts. Although the two traditions that we have examined may have existed in an oral tradition from a very early time the first written account of the Resurrection is to be found in the Pauline epistles. The accounts of Paul's experiences of the Risen Lord are to be found in Galatians 1, 1 Corinthians 9 and 15 and in the Acts of the Apostles. Before we examine these accounts in detail and other relevant passages it can be noted that although Paul gives a very important place to the Resurrection of Jesus as a fundamental doctrine of the Gospel he only refers three times in his letters to his own experiences of the risen Jesus. If we consider this in relationship to the facts that Paul was a Pharisee for whom the doctrine of the Resurrection would cause fewer problems than for a Sadducee and that as a theologically literate persecutor of the early church he would have known the teaching that Jesus had risen from the dead, we may assume that the actual experience recorded was not central either to his belief in the Resurrection or the Gospel of Jesus as a whole and that such an experience was generally unnecessary for belief. (cf. John 20. 29) The conviction that a man is justified by grace rather than by observance of the law was more important to Paul than the experience of the Risen Jesus.

It is not immediately possible to speak of a Pauline resurrection tradition. The problem is not simply the discovery of such a tradition. It is that we are confronted with what appear to be three traditions; Paul is connected with the Resurrection of Jesus in three ways.

a) The passages from 1 Corinthians.

In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul adds his own experience to the list of the other appearances using the word *ὡφθην*. Linked with this is the

passage in 1 Cor. 9 in which Paul again uses a form of ὁράω  
(These are the only two passages in Pauline literature where ὁράω in  
any form is used.)

b) Passages throughout the epistles in which statements of belief in  
the Resurrection or experiences of the Risen Lord are referred to.

1 Thess. 1. 10 A simple credal statement in which Paul looks forward  
to the coming Son who is defined as the one who has risen from the dead.

1 Thess. 4. 14 is very similar. There are no references to an appear-  
ance in these passages, which are, incidentally, the earliest in the  
New Testament.

Gal. 1. 11-16 Paul is taught the gospel by a revelation of Jesus Christ,  
the revelation of God is 'ἐν ἐμοί', 'in me'. We shall argue that this  
is not a reference to an appearance.

2 Cor. 12. Paul refers to visions and revelations of the Lord. The  
context makes it unlikely that this is a reference to an appearance.

c) The third group of references is not Pauline but Lucan and recounts the  
experience of Paul on the Damascus Road in Acts 9 and the reports of two  
speeches in Acts 22 and 26 in which Paul refers to this experience.

In assessing Paul's understanding of the Resurrection of Jesus we must

- 1) examine those passages which seem to refer to a 'seeing' of Jesus.
- 2) Examine the relationship of these passages to a) the synoptic refer-  
ences to the appearance of Jesus and b) to the Lucan accounts of the  
experience on the Damascus Road.

If the 1 Cor. passages refer to a 'seeing' comparable with the  
experiences in the Synoptic Gospels then they must almost certainly  
refer to the Damascus Road experience since no other comparable exper-  
ience is recorded or referred to. If we conclude either that they do

1. Filson p.238 The synoptic gospels  
contain earlier material but reached  
their present form later.



not refer to the Damascus Road experience or if we conclude that the Damascus Road experience is not a 'seeing' comparable to the 'seeings' in the Synoptic Gospels then the 1 Cor. passages are not 'seeings' in the same sense and Paul's experience of the resurrection of Jesus is not, at one level, comparable with the experiences recorded in the Synoptic Gospels.

We can dispose of the second group of references as irrelevant to the question. Those in 1 Thess. are credal statements. The reference in Gal. 1. 16 might be thought to be a reference to a 'seeing' but when read in context it clearly refers to experiences which took place between the experience on the Damascus Road and his meeting with the Church in Jerusalem. The reference in 2 Cor. 12 is to 'visions and revelations' in the plural - ὁπτασίας καὶ ἀποκαλύψεις - and is set in the context of mystical experiences.<sup>1</sup> It is clearly not a reference to the Damascus Road experience.

Before we can evaluate the references in 1 Cor. 9. and 15. we must examine the references to the Damascus Road experience.

There are three references to the Damascus Road experience;

- a) Acts 9. 1-9 (10-19, and 27)
- b) Acts 22. 6-16
- c) Acts 26. 12-18

We need first to establish the relationship between the accounts. Of the three, the second, in Acts 22, is contained in one of the 'we' passages in Acts in which the narrative passes into the first person plural. This account appears in the report of a speech by Paul and is

1. Ramsey Resurrection p.42.

the first of two detailed accounts of the experience on the Damascus Road that is given by Paul. The 'we' passages come into the narrative of Acts with no preparation or introduction and show no sign of serving a particular literary or theological purpose. It is not, therefore, unreasonable to assume that the 'we' passages are authentic first-hand reports. If this assumption is correct the Acts 22 version is the primary one and the earlier and later versions are editions of the Acts 22 version. This conclusion will be supported by the detailed examination of the text.

The argument of Schillebeeckx that Acts 22 and 26 are theological commentaries on Acts 9 seems to leave certain questions and considerations unexamined.<sup>1</sup> First it ignores the significance of the presence of the Acts 22 account in a 'we' passage. If the 'we' passages originate from first-hand accounts, and there seems to be no reason to suppose that they do not, then the Acts 22 account is the primary version of Paul's experience on the Damascus Road. If we find that argument unconvincing then we are faced with the problem of the source of the Acts 9 account. Who could the story have come from but Paul, and if from Paul is not the account from Acts 22, which purports to be a report of a speech by Paul, likely to be the primary account? It is possible, furthermore, to see Acts 9 as a literary expansion of Acts 22, as we shall see. Secondly, Schillebeeckx's argument seems to presume a very high degree of theological concern in a writer whose other work does not show this. While there is evidence that some of the material in the first part of Luke-Acts has shaped the literary form of some of the events in the second half of the book, e.g. the obvious literary parallels between the passion

1. Schillebeeckx Jesus pp.360 ff.

of Jesus and the death of Stephen, we do not find passages of theological commentary of the sort that Schillebeeckx suggests, nor do the two later passages look like commentaries on the version in Acts 9. Acts 26 does, however, in a minor way, comment on the two earlier accounts by the extension of the idea of Paul's eyes being opened to his mission to open the eyes of the Gentiles.

If we make the assumption that the Acts 22 account is the primary account we can see Acts 9 as a literary expansion of the primary account and Acts 26 as the summary of the earlier speech in which all the essential elements are preserved though condensed into one event. This seems the most obvious solution to the problem of the relationship between the accounts.

When we examine the accounts in detail we find that Acts 9 and 22 are very similar. The Ananias narrative is absent from the Acts 22 but this is quite understandable. Paul may well have not known the details of the vision of Ananias and, if he had, would not have included it in his speech. It would not have been relevant to his purpose in setting out the basis of his belief. In Acts 26 the two earlier accounts are condensed with no mention of Ananias at all and the missionary charge being given directly to Paul. This lengthens the speech of Jesus as the whole event takes place on the Damascus Road. There are no details of a journey to Damascus or of recovery at the hands of Ananias.

In none of the accounts does Paul himself mention that he saw the Risen Lord. In the two first-person accounts in Acts 22 and 26 Paul mentions seeing a bright light and hearing a voice which he does not recognise. The voice identifies itself as 'Jesus whom you persecute'.

1. See p.78 above.

The voice is the important element in the experience. Similarly the Acts 9 account does not mention that Paul saw anything but a bright light. Here as in the other accounts the voice is the central element. In Acts 26. 16 the voice says 'I have appeared to you' - ὡφθην - but Paul does not mention a 'seeing'. In Acts 9 and 22 Ananias refers to Jesus as the one who appeared or was seen by Paul and in Acts 9. 27 Barnabas reports that Paul has seen the Lord - εἶδεν. The same verb is used to describe Paul's vision of Ananias in 9. 12. We cannot therefore conclude (on the basis of the reports that he had 'seen' Jesus) that the references to Paul 'seeing' means the same sort of experience as the experiences of the Synoptic Gospels. The word εἶδεν is used in this context to refer to a vision; 9. 12; 22. 17, and in the absence of any report by Paul that he saw Jesus on the Damascus Road we can assume that in this passage it could therefore mean either 'seen' in the sense of 'understood' or in the sense of seeing a vision. The use of ὡφθην in 26. 16 is clearly related to the subsequent instruction that constitutes the missionary charge, that is that Paul is to open the eyes of the Gentiles.

The references to the Damascus Road experience do not seem to indicate a 'seeing' comparable with the Synoptic Gospel 'seeings'. There are in any case other differences between the Acts appearances and the Synoptic Gospel appearances which make it even less likely that they are referring to the same sort of experience. Firstly, the Damascus Road experience is, in Paul's words, 'out of due time' (1 Cor. 15. 8). It is after the Ascension and gift of the Spirit at Pentecost and the beginning of the Church's mission, which included the preaching of the

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1. Or equally good would be 'I have revealed myself to you.'

resurrection of Jesus from the first moment. No other resurrection appearance is mentioned after the Ascension and the gift of the Spirit. Secondly, even in those meetings where Jesus is not recognised at once he is recognised eventually. If we compare the treatment by the author of Luke-Acts of the appearances in Luke and in Acts the difference becomes even more obvious. The care taken in Luke to emphasise the reality and solidity of the risen body of Jesus is quite absent in Acts. As Ramsey comments 'It is hard to imagine Paul ascribing to the risen body such actions as the eating of a piece of broiled fish.' The careful descriptions of Luke are replaced by the report of a bright light and a voice which identifies itself as 'Jesus whom you persecute'. This is a fruitful starting-place for the development of a theology of the Church as the extension of the Incarnation, the Body of Christ, but not the basis for the assumption that the Damascus Road experience is similar to the experiences reported in the Synoptic Gospels.

We must now examine the use of ὀράω in 1 Cor. (ὤφθην in 15. 8 and ἑώρακα in 9. 1). In the passage in 1 Cor. 15 Paul gives a list of the appearances of the risen Lord and adds his own experience at the end of the list using the same verb to describe what he 'saw' as he uses to describe what the others 'saw'.

ὅ καὶ ὅτι ὤφθην Κηφᾶ, εἶτα τοῖς  
 δώδεκα· 6 ἔπειτα ὤφθην ἐπάνω πεντακοσίοις ἀδελφοῖς  
 ἐφάπαξ, ἐξ ὧν οἱ πλείονες μένουσιν ἕως ἄρτι, τινὲς δὲ  
 ἐκοιμήθησαν· 7 ἔπειτα ὤφθην Ἰακώβῳ, εἶτα τοῖς ἀπο-  
 στόλοις πᾶσιν· 8 ἔσχατον δὲ πάντων ὡς περὶ τῷ ἐκτρώ-  
 ματι ὤφθην καὶ μοί.

In 1 Cor. 9.1. he reports that he has seen the Lord using ὁράω .

At first sight it seems reasonable to make the assumption that Paul had exactly the same experience as the others; but the examination of the Damascus road experience shows that if this is the experience referred to in 1 Cor. then there are substantial differences between it and the Synoptic experiences. Unless the experience referred to in 1 Cor. is a second experience, and no reference to a second experience is made anywhere, we can reasonably conclude that they do refer to the same experience. The only solution to the problem is that the use of ὁράω does not necessarily constitute an assertion that Paul had the same sort of experience as those who had earlier 'seen' the risen Lord. The argument which seeks to show that the word ὁράω does refer to similar experiences in all its uses assumes that Paul is arguing from the similarity of his experience to earlier experiences in order to authenticate his claim to apostleship. This assumption must fall when we examine the use of ὁράω in its context.

In 1 Cor. 15 Paul is seeking to show to the Church that salvation comes only from the Gospel which he preached and that there is no alternative. He then recounts the tradition giving the only unequivocal reference in all his writings to his own experience of the risen Lord. The tradition that he recounts is the one which he received and he includes his own experience at the end of the list using the same word to describe his experience as he used to describe the earlier appearances, as we saw above. He gives no details of the experience and nothing in any other of the Pauline letters does anything to illuminate the use of

ὁράω . The only guide is the use of another form of the verb

- ἡ παρουσία in 1 Cor. 9, 'Have I not seen the Lord?'. Since Paul gives no details of the appearance we cannot tell if it comes within the Matthean tradition or the Lucan/Johannine tradition about the nature of the risen body. We may conclude that there existed a very simple third tradition in the form of a creed of which this passage is perhaps the product.

At first sight Paul appears to base his claim to apostleship on the similarity between his experience to that of the earlier witnesses of the Resurrection. His use of ὡφθῆναι gives weight to that first conclusion. In fact his argument operates in the opposite direction. He does not argue from his experience to the truth of the Resurrection and so on to his right to be an apostle. His line of argument begins with the fact of his preaching and that it has been effective in bringing the Corinthians to new life and that since it has had this effect the Resurrection of Jesus must be true. He does not rely on his experience to authenticate the Resurrection and his own apostleship but upon the effect of the preaching on the Corinthians of the risen Jesus. The important fact for Paul is not his place at the end of the tradition but rather that he preaches the same gospel as the others and that the Corinthians believed that gospel. '... what matters is that I preach what they preach, and this is what you all believed. Now if Christ raised from the dead is what has been preached, how can some of you say that there has been no resurrection from the dead?' This is an odd argument but it is good exhortation. The new life in Christ which has been experienced certifies the truth of the preaching that God has raised Jesus from the dead. If Paul thought of himself as in some way

1. Baker The Foolishness of God p.261.

2. Kung On Being a Christian p.348 f.

The Dutch Catechism p.179 e.g.

the recipient of the same experience as the earlier experiences he was not ready to rest his claim to apostleship on it but preferred to work back to the Resurrection of Jesus from the Corinthians' experience of conversion.

The argument that the use of ὡφθῆν indicates that Paul's experience places him within the tradition of the apostles rather than that he has had the same experience as the other apostles becomes more persuasive when we observe that the only other place in which he uses a form of ὁράω is in 1 Cor. 9. 1. ἑώρακα . ὁράω is not a Pauline word and its use here is not sufficient to sustain the assertion that, contrary to all his other references to the risen Lord and contrary to his own account of the Damascus Road experience in Acts, he believed that his experience was identical to that of the earlier witnesses.

Bearing in mind the earlier points about Paul's belief in the Resurrection (page/26above), his almost certain knowledge of the claim that Jesus had risen from the dead, the fact that the crucial turning point for Paul, expressed time and time again in his letters, is that justification is not by law but by grace through faith, the likelihood that ὁράω means 'see' in the sense of comprehend or understand seems very strong. It is a perfectly proper translation of ὁράω. The more general relationship of 'seeing', 'opening eyes' and 'understanding' occurs at e.g. Mk. 10.35-40. The blind man who cannot see can 'see' the truth about Jesus and receives his sight. cf. Acts 26. 18. We have in the earliest Pauline writings a credal statement concerning the Resurrection, the earliest speeches in Acts are also credal in form and it seems likely therefore that Paul's uses of ὡφθῆν in a credal statement is asserting that he, on the basis of his experience, wishes to align himself with the Apostolic tradition.



Three observations need to be made before suggesting the way in which Paul understood the Resurrection. It might be thought to be a weakness in the argument that 1 Corinthians 15 is a credal statement that it is only found there. One would expect to find more than one example of a credal statement by a large number of theologians from several different traditions. The second observation is that it is difficult to locate the tradition set out in 1 Corinthians 15 within other records of the Resurrection experiences. It is only possible to do so by a harmonisation of texts, a process unlikely to produce a satisfactory result. Von Campenhausen attempts such a harmonisation.<sup>1</sup>

Paul himself and the version of the Gospel of the Hebrews mentioned by Jerome are the only sources of the appearance to James and Paul the only source of the appearance to the five hundred.<sup>2</sup> This may not be significant if this passage is, as we have argued, a credal statement. It is noteworthy, however, that two such significant appearances have no other sources.

Thirdly we can observe that the author of Acts in his account of the apostolic preaching in Acts 10. 40-43 is wholly Lucan and different in every respect from the events in Acts 9. The difference must have been obvious to writer and to his readers. It is a further reinforcement of the differences we observed between the Resurrection appearances in the Synoptic gospels and the various accounts of the events of the Damascus Road.

The examination of the references in 1 Cor. and in Acts to Paul's experience on the Damascus Road and a comparison of these accounts with the accounts in the Synoptic gospels leads us to the conclusion, even stated at its most tentative, that a similarity between the pre-Ascension and pre-Pentecost events and the events on the Damascus Road based solely on the use of *ὁραω* is very far from certain. The evidence against the conclusion is substantial.

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1. Von Campenhausen Tradition and Life in the Church pp.42 ff. 2. Jerome de vir. ill. 2.

So far, however, we have been discussing the reports of what we take to be objective events, seeking to decide if, on the basis of the reports, the two events were similar. If, however, we examine the function of the experiences then we find substantial similarities. To those who experienced the events it would have been the subjective effect which would have been important and memorable. If we ask the question 'What did these events say to those who experienced them?' we find ourselves with a different set of considerations.

The function of the experience of the risen Jesus, in whatever way He was experienced, was that those who received the experience were able to be constituted apostles. Clearly not everyone who witnessed the risen Lord became apostles but it was a prerequisite to apostleship to have witnessed the risen Lord (Acts 1. 22).

After the Resurrection, the Ascension and the gift of the Spirit the men who had witnessed the whole series of events went out on the evangelistic mission of the Church as apostles. After his experience on the Damascus Road and the visit by Ananias, Paul, too, has been through a series of experiences that constituted him an apostle. Twelve men are the new Israel sent initially to the old Israel for the proclamation of the Messiahship of Jesus. Paul, not one of the twelve and not a witness of the Resurrection in the same sense, is an apostle by grace.

He is an apostle on a different basis and with a different mission. He might, later, have reflected that all vocations are by the grace of God but on this occasion when reflecting upon his own apostleship in comparison with those whose claim to apostleship is so well-founded he may have concluded that the grace of God was more apparent in his apostleship than in that of the others.

We can say, therefore, that while it is perhaps an oversimplification to suggest that Paul understood the Resurrection in the same way as those who received the earlier experience understood it, (and it would be a further oversimplification to suggest that the Synoptic accounts are simply different versions of a very similar experience), it is correct to say that the experience has the same result; that is the establishment of the man as an apostle. It is clear, too, that the whole complex of experiences, the Resurrection, the Ascension and Pentecost constitute a man an apostle and not only the experience of witnessing the risen Jesus.

### Conclusion

For the synoptic writers, for John and for Paul the Resurrection was a complex experience which had the function of certifying the risen Jesus as the Messiah. The witnessing of the Resurrection was also the first step in the constitution of a person as an apostle.

The synoptic understanding was not substantially developed in Acts. In Acts the Resurrection is understood to be the fulfilment of the prophecy that the Messiah, God's beloved Son, would not see corruption and therefore the certification of Jesus as Messiah. Although the doctrine of the work of Jesus is developed in the Petrine sermons in Acts the teaching on the Resurrection of Jesus is not developed, nor is there any substantial development in the Pauline sermons in Acts.

It is not until we come to the Pauline epistles that a substantial exposition of the understanding of the significance of the Resurrection is made. A full exposition is beyond the range of this study. A summary of two aspects of Paul's understanding of the Resurrection is in the following sections.

The Pauline Understanding of the Risen Body.

We may come to Paul's understanding of the risen Christ by an examination of Paul's understanding of the risen body of those who have died in Christ. Before we examine this in detail we need to notice that at one level the risen Christ was, for Paul, the Church, the body of Christ. It is interesting to see that this understanding occurs and is developed in some of the Fathers.<sup>1</sup> The voice on the Damascus Road asks the persecutor of the Church 'Why do you persecute me?' Christians are, by the Spirit, those who do the work of Christ and having suffered with Christ will be glorified with Him; c.f. Romans 8. 14ff. This is clearly a very important element in the teaching of Paul. For him the most significant manifestation of the risen Christ is the Church. He never speculates about the nature of the risen Christ's body and clearly the subject is of no great interest to him.

Paul's theology developed against a complex intellectual background in which belief in the immortality of the soul and the corruption of the body was common among those influenced by Platonic thought. The understanding of the Resurrection of all men was expressed in a wide variety of ways, as we shall see in the Fathers,<sup>2</sup> from a simple reconstitution of the body which<sup>3</sup> has died and become corrupted to the transformation of the earthly body into a spiritualised and glorious body and then in some cases to a complete rejection of the body in any form whatsoever.<sup>3</sup> The synoptic understanding of the risen body is contained in the passage containing the dispute between Jesus and the Sadducees over the question of levirate marriage and resurrection. The risen body will be glorified

1. See pp. 153f below; e.g. Ign. Trall. 10,

11. Iren. haer. 5.2.2.

2. See pp. 144f below.

3. See pp. 145f below. For extreme platonism see the Apocalypse of John ANF 8 pp. 582 ff. and the Epistle to Diognetus

6, Loeb Classical Library vol. 2 pp. 360f

like an angel and the identity will persist.<sup>1</sup> Paul develops this understanding. The body has a fundamental place in the process of redemption.<sup>2</sup> The argument is developed most fully in I Corinthians 15 where the discussion concerns those who have died. He contrasts the body which dies and is buried with the risen body.

' Someone may ask, "How are the dead people raised, and what sort of body do they have when they come back?" They are stupid questions. Whatever you sow in the ground has to die before it is given new life and the thing that is sown is not the thing that is going to come; you sow a bare grain, say of wheat or of something like that, and then God gives it the sort of body he has chosen: each sort of seed gets its own sort of body. '

I Corinthians 15. 35-38

There is continuity between the person known in the flesh and the person to be known in the Resurrection body, but Resurrection is not so much resuscitation as transfiguration;

' Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. '

I Corinthians 15. 50

The body is changed and the Resurrection body is *σῶμα πνευματικόν* which from the context means a body in a different order of being as the flesh of animals is of a different order of being from the flesh of men and so on; the dead body is a bare grain but God gives it a body as he has chosen. Paul does not speculate further on the matter.

It is at this point that we can see a common understanding of the

1. Mark 12.18 ff. 2. Romans 8.23.

nature of the Resurrection between Paul and the Gospels or at least a significant number of common elements in the understanding, for Paul's thought at this point is remarkably at one with the narratives of the Gospel which record :

- a) an empty tomb and therefore a real rising;
- b) a continuity between the crucified Jesus and the risen Lord but also;
- c) a clear indication that the risen body of Jesus is in some way different from the body of Jesus before the Resurrection. Jesus is not recognised on occasions and appears and disappears in ways which indicate that the risen body is not a simple flesh and blood body. It is much more than that.

These three characteristics of the Resurrection of Jesus are the basis of Paul's understanding of the risen body of those who die in Christ to rise again.

The significance of the Resurrection can be summarised in this way:

- a) It stands to the New Testament as the Exodus stands to the Old Testament.
- b) It signifies the victory of the suffering Messiah.
- c) It indicates the restoration and renewal of all those incorporated into Christ and is the pledge of first fruit of the renewal and restoration of all things. This latter point is not the main focus of understanding among the Fathers to Augustine. As we can see the demands of apologetic led to the emphasis being attached to the relatively unimportant question of the nature of the Resurrection body; c.f. Paul's comment in I Cor. 15. 35-36.

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1. See p.162 below for the patristic uses of ἀνακεφαλαιώσις. This understanding is present in some of the Fathers but is not the main focus of understanding.

The Resurrection in the Apocryphal Literature of the Early Church.

While the apocryphal literature of the early Church was not dignified with canonical status, an examination of it gives an added dimension to our picture of the ways in which the Resurrection was understood in the early days of the Church's life. It may, more particularly, give us a picture of the more spectacular and, perhaps, for that reason more popular understanding of the Resurrection in this period.

We are faced at the start with a problem of definition. How do we define 'apocryphal literature'? A long attempt to define it is not justified and when we observe the second problem which is raised by apocryphal literature, that is that it is large in volume and heterogeneous in quality we shall take the easy path of examining only that literature which is so classified in the edition of the Ante-Nicene Fathers and in the collection of M.R. James. The method is not satisfactory if we are aiming to produce an exhaustive study of the understanding of the Resurrection in this genre but this would be beyond the scope of this study. We must content ourselves with studying a representative selection of this literature. It will become more obvious when we examine the lives of saints and the lives of the Egyptian monks that the genre persisted in popular writings, sometimes only very slightly purged of its heretical and spectacular elements.

We have only one account of the Resurrection itself, indeed the only account in any Church literature; this is in the Gospel of Peter. This document gives an account of the passion and death and Resurrection of Jesus. It is clearly an edition with substantial additions of the synoptic narratives and it gives a graphic account of the Resurrection itself.

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1.ANF.vol.8.,The Apocryphal New Testament tr.M.R.James.

' ... they see three men coming forth from the tomb, and two of them supporting one, and cross following them: and of the two the head reached unto the heaven, but the head of him that was led by them overpassed the heavens. And they heard a voice from the heavens, saying, "Thou hast preached to them that sleep." And a response was heard from the cross, "Yea". '

Gospel of Peter 39.

The Acts of Pilate that form part of the Gospel of Nicodemus in both its Greek and Latin forms gives an account of the experience of the guards, who hear from the angels that Jesus is risen and gone into Galilee.<sup>1</sup> The passage is reminiscent of Matthew 28. 5-7. In part 2, in a passage that recalls Matthew 27. 53. although within a different sequence of events, the saints are reported to be raised by Jesus and their tombs found to be empty. The Gospel of Nicodemus also gives an account of the experience of Joseph of Arimathea, who is imprisoned by the Sanhedrin and examined by them about the Resurrection.<sup>2</sup> He is visited in prison by Jesus. Fearing that he is experiencing a diabolical phantom he recites the ten commandments as a protection against the presence of a supposed phantom. The narrative has similarities both to the account of the conversion of Paul and to the accounts of the releases from prison that occur in Acts.

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1.c.13 1st Greek version.

2.c.15 1st Greek version.



The Acts of Andrew and Matthias also contains accounts of visions of Jesus that bear marked similarity to the experiences of Paul and Ananias.

Other references to the appearances of Jesus have nothing to do with the Resurrection, as they are appearances of Jesus as a young child, a feature of several apocryphal acts.

As to the Resurrection more generally there are two legend-like accounts of raisings or apparent raisings. In the Acts of the Holy Apostle Thomas the apostle raises a girl to life who then gives an account of the underworld. In the Acts and Martyrdom of Matthew the dead body of the apostle is the cause of miracles and appears to move. The passages are of no significance.

The last two more general accounts of the state of the risen are interesting as they represent two diametrically opposed views. In the Vision of Paul the necessity of the body for judgement is asserted, a favourite patristic argument which lies within the general anti-docetic and psychosomatic anthropology of orthodox belief, if somewhat materially expressed. At the other extreme the Apocalypse of John denies the possibility of distinct Resurrection bodies, referring to the synoptic passage on Resurrection and levirate marriage as grounds for the belief. The relevant passage finishes with the assertion : 'All the human race shall arise without bodies.'<sup>2</sup>

The apocryphal literature examined adds little to our knowledge of the early understanding of the Resurrection. Much of it is the expression of orthodox belief decorated with legend and only in one or

1.c.14.

2.ANF.vol.8.pp.582 ff.

two places does the overstatement become heterodox. Many of the accounts of martyrdoms and risings depend on narratives in canonical writings, e.g. the burial of Andrew is very similar to accounts of the burial of Jesus; but taken as a whole this literature adds nothing of substance to our understanding of the Resurrection.

The Patristic Understanding of the Resurrection in the Principal Fathers of East and West from Clement of Rome to Augustine of Hippo.

The earliest patristic writing is contemporary with some canonical scripture and may well ante-date John, in its final form, and the later ending of Mark. At some stages before the closing of the canon of scripture I Clement was regarded as canonical. The earliest literature is not speculative and contents itself with a simple statement that Christ has been raised from the dead. Of much more concern to the writers from Tertullian onwards is the nature of the risen body of those who will rise at the last day. As with Paul, however, the two understandings are linked. We shall rise in the way in which Jesus rose. This makes necessary the examination of the understanding of the risen body in the Fathers. The Fathers were also concerned to provide an understanding of the whole doctrine of Resurrection as they met with sceptical opposition to the doctrine. The nature of the opposition was an important factor in the development of the understanding of the Resurrection.

An apologetic concern is not obvious in the earliest thinking about Resurrection, but it soon becomes clear that the demand of apologetic is a powerful agent in the development of the theology of the Resurrection.

The apologetic concern is combined with the necessity to counter the constant tendency to docetism present in the contemporary intellectual world. We can observe a belief in a psychosomatic anthropology in the first writers on the Resurrection although even among them we find those who believe in a Platonic anthropology; e.g. the Epistle to Diognetus ch. 6. For the most part however the Fathers believed that if a person was to rise he must rise with a body. Over the period to be examined in this section the understanding passes from the crudest materialism to a near-docetic spiritualisation of the risen body. Towards the end of the period we find that the understanding of the Resurrection rejects both of these extremes. Arguments from natural analogy and philosophy as well as biblical arguments are used in the development of the understanding. The inadequacy of the natural arguments led to an increasing dependence upon biblical exegesis, which in turn raised the problem of choosing either literal or allegorical exegesis, both methods being used to suit the argument. The ambiguities of the biblical texts used to support the arguments helped neither side and there is not, in the early years, a real biblical theology of the Resurrection. The tendency of those who held to an heretical anthropology to engage in either personal immorality or fierce asceticism added urgency to the development of an adequate doctrine of the nature of the risen body.

The early Fathers developed their theology in the face of an hostile intellectual world. They drew upon substantial intellectual resources as they met the arguments and criticisms of their opponents and at the same time carried on a lively debate with fellow Christians

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1. i.e. a dualism that sees the body and the soul not as a unity with two dimensions but as a combination of two units that can be separated again. At death the soul persists and the body dissolves.

whose views were thought to be dangerous. The varied nature of the criticisms faced by the Fathers drew varied responses and we find no single style of argument predominating. The unifying factor throughout is the assertion that Jesus really rose from the dead and that those who died in Christ would also really rise. Much of the debate centred on the nature of the risen body.

We shall examine the writings of the Fathers in this period as they begin and develop the Church's discussion and teaching; we shall observe the development of apologetic intent and the accompanying development of doctrine; we shall examine in detail some of the the major themes and disputes and some of the dead ends into which the argument wandered. We shall finish this section with an examination of Augustine's understanding of the Resurrection. While it is not always possible to do justice to the development of an idea by a simple chronological study of the writers, the method here will be chronological with references forward and back as necessary. A further preliminary comment is that it is anachronistic to use the words 'orthodox' and 'heretical' in the context of the intellectual pluralism of the early Fathers. These words are used when necessary to describe a development that in the light of subsequent decisions was seen to be either orthodox or heretical.

It has been observed by Bettenson that in the writings of the earliest Father, Clement of Rome, 'we find no ecstasies, no miraculous "gifts of the Spirit", no demonology, no preoccupation with an imminent "Second Coming". The Church has settled down in the world, and is going about its task "soberly, discreetly and advisedly" '.<sup>1</sup> The first

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1. Bettenson Early Christian Fathers p.2 f.

letter of Clement to the Corinthian Church (probably circa 97) is not concerned with disputes over doctrine nor do we find much evidence of the apocalyptic fervour into which the Church was born. He is concerned to strengthen the Corinthian Church in the face of persecution and threatened schism. He writes from one Church under pressure to another exhorting unity, repentance and steadfastness. When he comes to write of the Resurrection he begins with the simplest statement of belief in the Resurrection of Jesus using language dependent upon I Corinthians 15. 20 and Colossians 1. 18.

' Let us consider, beloved, how the Lord continually proves to us that there will be a future Resurrection, of which he has rendered the Lord Jesus Christ the first fruits by raising him from the dead.' ch. 24.

He develops the point in the style of a sermon by pointing to the Resurrection which takes place in the natural world;

' Day and night declares to us a Resurrection. The night sinks to sleep, and the day arises; ... let us behold ... how sowing of grain takes place. The sower goes forth and casts it into the ground, and the seed, being thus scattered, though dry and naked when it fell upon the earth is gradually dissolved. Then out of its dissolution the mighty power of the providence of the Lord raises it up again and from one seed many arise and bring forth fruit. ' ch. 24.

The use of the cyclic return of the day and night and the seed dying to live again in plants reflects the Stoic belief in the cyclic restoration

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of all things. Clement may be using images from the most sympathetic pagan philosophy to help his readers understand his teaching.<sup>1</sup> The similarity between Stoic belief and Christian belief is only superficial however and the distinction between Christian belief in the Resurrection and the Stoic belief in cyclic restoration was clearly understood by Christians.<sup>2</sup> The value of Stoic philosophy was that it was more adaptable to Christian belief than the principal alternative, Platonism, in which the body is the tomb of the soul and Resurrection unthinkable.<sup>3</sup> The principal critics of the Resurrection of the body whose criticism survives are the Platonists Plotinus, Porphyry and Celsus.

Clement next uses the phoenix as a sign of the Resurrection. The legend of the phoenix which dies and rises again every five hundred years is a common legend of the period and is used later by Tertullian and others in the same way.<sup>4</sup> It is not an analogy of the Resurrection that can be carried very far, but is the use of a well known legend to argue the possibility of Resurrection after death. Clement finishes with quotations from the Old Testament and with references indirectly to New Testament passages. He urges his readers to faithfulness as a result of their hope in the Resurrection. Clement is not writing in response to criticism or opposition but to a Church that had in the past received Paul's letters which included substantial teaching about the Resurrection. We must not therefore be surprised at the brevity and simplicity of his argument. He is speaking to the converted. He does not engage in any profound discussion of the Resurrection of Jesus or of the future hope of Resurrection. His work is neither an apology nor a developed theology

1.Seneca letters 36.11.cf.Paul in Acts 17

2.e.g. Tatian ad Graecos 6.

3.Plato's reference to reincarnation in the Republic is not a reference to resurrection in the orthodox Christian sense and is not therefore relevant.

4.Tert.de res.13 for example.The legend is seriously questioned by Herodotus hist.

2.73.,Pliny the elder hist.10.3., Tacitus annals 6.28.

but a simple statement of belief with illustrations to make the belief more easily understood.

2 Clement is almost certainly not from the pen of Clement of Rome and the author is unknown.<sup>1</sup> It was found in the Codex Alexandrinus sent by Cyril Lucar, Patriarch of Constantinople to Archbishop Abbot. It is in the form of a homily and seeks, in ch. 9, to argue, what will become the familiar argument for the Resurrection of the flesh, i.e. that Christians are saved in the flesh and so the 'very flesh' will rise again and must be preserved as the temple of God. Stylistic differences, its apologetic content and its insistence on a material identity between the body that dies and the body that will be raised places this work substantially later than I Clement. The debate does not take this form for some time.

The letter of Polycarp of Smyrna to the Church in Philippi (c. 155) contains a similarly simple statement of belief in the Resurrection and expresses his confidence that the Resurrection of Jesus is the sign that he will raise up those who obey him.<sup>2</sup> He quotes from Acts 2. 24 and I Peter 1. 21, and his general point about the relationship between the Resurrection of Jesus and the Resurrection of the faithful is similar to I Corinthians 6. 14, 2 Corinthians 4. 14 and Romans 8. 11. This is a simple statement of faith made by a martyr on his way to martyrdom. The account of his martyrdom contained in the encyclical letter of the Church in Smyrna recorded by Eusebius<sup>3</sup> gives the prayer of Polycarp in which he speaks of 'the Resurrection of eternal life, both of soul and body, through the incorruption (imparted) by the Holy Ghost.' (ch. 14).

1. Written c.150 A.D. Apostolic Fathers vol. 1 tr.Kirsopp Lake pp.126 - 127  
Loeb Classical Library.

2.Polycarp ep.ad Phil. 1 & 2.

3.Eusebius h.e.4.4.

Polycarp is recorded as believing in the Resurrection of the soul and body and that this is the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is the first statement in the early Fathers about the nature of the risen body. It would be unwise, however, to read a developed understanding into this passage.

The incorruption was given to Polycarp's body immediately. The flames do not touch his body. Subsequently, however, he is killed by a stab wound and his blood extinguishes the flames. His body, once dead, is then burnt.<sup>1</sup> The letter does not reflect upon this as a bar to his subsequent Resurrection as later writers are forced to do in response to problems put to them by those who do not accept the very simple materialistic doctrine of the risen body that is developed. As we observed above, there were members of the early Church who held a totally Platonic view of the risen body.<sup>2</sup> They are, however, a small minority.

In the letters of Ignatius of Antioch (30-107) we find the first sustained response to docetism, a response which is a common feature of the writings of many of the early Fathers. The docetic challenge is the first one they have to face on the intellectual level. As we have seen in the Epistle to Diognetus, some members of the Church did not accept the psychosomatic anthropology which became orthodox belief and thought in more Platonic terms. The main trend of the Fathers in the early period was, however, strongly anti-docetic and Ignatius is the first to deal with the heresy as a specific problem. He is not seriously concerned to demonstrate the truth or the possibility of the Resurrection of Jesus although he notes that the heretics do not believe it.<sup>3</sup> He states

1.M.Polyc. 17.

2.Diog.6.

3.Ignatius Trall.6.



the belief of the Church and uses the well established illustration of Jonah's stay in the whale's belly.<sup>1</sup> He stresses the reality of the risen body of Jesus,<sup>2</sup> in Smyrneans quoting the Doctrine of Peter; 'Lay hold, handle me and see that I am not an incorporeal spirit.'<sup>3</sup>

In the letter to the Trallians he proceeds from the Resurrection of Jesus to the Resurrection of those who are members of Christ; 'The Father, therefore, who raised him up, will also raise us up through him, apart from whom no one will attain to true life.'<sup>4</sup> We do not have yet any consideration of the risen body of the faithful or any argument which proceeds from the necessity of Resurrection generally for the purpose of judgement. The assertion that there must be a body for a person to rise as a person, an argument of importance later, is not as significant as the moral argument, developed in the face of heresy, that the body must be taken seriously in this life since it will accompany the person into the Resurrection.<sup>5</sup> The problems about bodies eaten by wild beasts which are put to later Christians by those who do not accept the Resurrection of the faithful and which result in some complicated arguments and discussion are of no significance to Ignatius, who positively welcomes being eaten by wild beasts.<sup>6</sup> The appearance of Ignatius after his death recorded in the Martyrdom of Ignatius<sup>7</sup> is of no importance. Ignatius believes that the Resurrection of Jesus was accompanied by the Resurrection of the saints,<sup>8</sup> and the hope of future Resurrection is guaranteed by the Resurrection of Jesus; 'Christ invites you to share in his immortality, by his passion and Resurrection, inasmuch as ye are his members.'<sup>9</sup>

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1. Ignatius Trall. 9. cf. Justin dial. 107.

2. Ignatius Trall. 10., Smyrn. 3.

3. See Origen. princ. 1. preface 8.

4. Ignatius Trall. 10.

5. Ignatius Trall. 11.

6. Ignatius Rom. 4.

7. M. Ign. Ant. 7. ANF. 1. p. 131.

8. Ignatius Magn. 9.

9. Ignatius. Trall. 11.

Ignatius is the first to link the presence of Jesus in the Eucharistic bread with his risen body. Belief in the identification of the faithful with the risen body of Jesus is also stated.

' The Father, therefore, who raised Him up, will also raise us up through Him, apart from whom no one will attain to true life. For says he, "I am the life; he that believeth on me, even though he die, shall live : and every one that liveth and believeth in me, even though he die, shall live for ever." Do ye therefore flee from these ungodly heresies; for they are the inventions of the devil, that serpent who was the author of evil, and who by means of the woman deceived Adam, the father of our race. .... But Christ invites you to (share in) His immortality, by His passion and resurrection, inasmuch as ye are His members. ' 1

The same is true of the identification of the Eucharistic bread with the risen Jesus.<sup>2</sup> In Philadelphians 4 the point is developed to urge unity with the bishop, membership of the Church is participation in the one risen body of Jesus.

' For there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ and one cup to show forth the unity of his blood; one altar; as there is one bishop ... ' 3

The identification is clearer in Smyrneans 7

' They abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer because they confess not the Eucharist to be the flesh of Our Saviour

1. Ignatius Trall. 11 & 12.

2. Ignatius Philad. 4., Rom. 7., Smyrn. 7.

3. Ignatius Philad. 4.

Jesus Christ which suffered for our sins, and which the  
 Father, of his goodness, raised up again. <sup>1</sup>

This is not a developed and carefully argued statement but rather a statement of the belief of Ignatius about the mystical identification between the body of Jesus risen, the Eucharistic body of Christ and the Church as the body of Christ. It is a beginning of a theology which is developed by later Fathers. <sup>2</sup>

In Ignatius we see a clear belief in the Resurrection of Jesus and our hope of Resurrection dependent upon it and we also see the first brushes of the Church with docetism, a dispute which develops in later writers. We also see the connection between the three uses of the words 'Body of Christ' beginning. There is no attempt to develop the understanding of the nature of the Resurrection body.

Justin Martyr <sup>3</sup> develops the anti-docetic arguments of Ignatius and his writing indicates that he may have had to face more sustained and substantial criticism of the doctrine of the Resurrection of the faithful than any earlier writer. We find in the first Apology the simple statement of belief that Jesus 'died and rose again'. <sup>4</sup> In his Dialogue with Trypho there is a brief discussion of the prophecy in Psalm 22 of the Resurrection and he uses the reference to Jonah to support his argument further, <sup>5</sup> and in a passage reminiscent of the anti-Jewish apologetic of Matthew 28 he observes that the Resurrection of Jesus did not convert the Jews. <sup>6</sup>

Only the 1st and 2nd Apologies and the Dialogue with Trypho are certainly authentic. <sup>7</sup> The examination of the work 'On the Resurrection'

1. Ignatius Smyrn. 7.

2. See for example p. 161 below.

3. c. 110 - 165.

4. Justin 1<sup>st</sup> apol. 46

5. Justin dial. 106 & 107

6. Justin dial. 108

7. ed. Otto p. vii vol. 3. Grant p. 249 note referring to Hitchcock in ZNW 36 (1937) pp. 35 - 60.

will not, therefore, provide us with an understanding of the beliefs of Justin but of the unknown author. The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church places this work in the 4th or 5th centuries.<sup>1</sup> It is convenient to examine the work here but it does not, of course, represent the thought of the 2nd century and is therefore some thing of a diversion from the historical study that we are following.

In this work it is argued, against docetism, that the flesh will rise again exactly as it was before death. The risen Jesus had, therefore, the same body as before his death. In response to the question about the Gospel passage on levirate marriage and the Resurrection the author defends the materialistic understanding of the risen body, despite the apparent denial of a physical Resurrection in this passage, by the comment that since celibacy is common in this life there is no reason why it should not be universal in the Resurrection.<sup>2</sup>

The members of the body can rise without being used;

' Let not, then, those that are unbelieving marvel, if in the world to come we do away with those acts of our fleshly members which even in this life are abolished. ' <sup>3</sup>

The question of the Resurrection of the deformed is dealt with simply by pointing to the fact that since Jesus healed the sick during his life on earth there is no reason why he should not do so in the Resurrection.<sup>4</sup>

In chapter 5 the author returns to the anti-docetic argument again. It

1. O.D.C.C. art. ' Justin ' 2. fragment on the res. 2,3. ANF vol.1 pp.294 ff.  
3. fragment on the res. 3.cf. Augustine de civ.dei 22.16. for a different solution to this problem. 4. fragment on res.4.

had been suggested by a Platonist critic that the Resurrection of the flesh is impossible because it is not worthy of being raised and, in fact, after its dissolution cannot be raised. The author does not immediately answer the first point but deals with the second point, that is that the Resurrection of the flesh is impossible. He answers this with the answer which is used more and more by those who are unwilling to take the argument into the opponent's court although, later, he uses the philosopher's tools in his argument. He depends upon the omnipotence of God. His opponents believe that the pagan gods are omnipotent; he quotes the Odyssey to support his point. He then quotes the Psalms to show that the pagan gods are inferior to God and that God must therefore be omnipotent. It is no more remarkable that the flesh should rise again than 'that from a little drop of moisture so grand a living creature is formed.'

The first point, that is that the flesh is unworthy to rise, is simply answered by the author, God made fleshly man in his own image and this flesh was assumed by Jesus and cannot, therefore, of itself be unworthy of rising.<sup>2</sup> His strong hold on orthodox psychosomatic anthropology leads him to the obvious conclusion that a person saved must be a whole person saved. He rejects completely the dualist view that the flesh causes the soul to sin,

' and thus they vainly accuse it, and lay to its charge alone the sins of both. But in what instance can the flesh possibly sin by itself if it has not the soul going before and inciting it? ' <sup>3</sup>

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- 1.Fragment on the resurrection 5.cf.the use of the same widely - used illustration Justin 1 apoll. 19
  - 2.Fragment on the resurrection 7 - 10.
  - 3.Fragment on the resurrection 3.

The Resurrection of Jesus and the salvation of the body mean that the body will rise again as flesh in the same flesh it was before its death. As he answers the dualist objection completely, with his eye on the tendency of dualism to extremes of asceticism or physical indulgence, he argues that the fact that the flesh is guarded and not indulged would make no sense if it did not rise again.

' ... if our physician Christ, God, having rescued us from our desires, regulates our flesh with his own wise and temperate rule, it is evident that he guards it from sins because it possesses a hope of salvation, as physicians do not suffer men whom they hope to save, to indulge in what pleasures they please. ' <sup>1</sup>

The author is heavily dependent on Greek philosophy, although he rejects Platonic anthropology. In chapter 10 of 'On the Resurrection' he compares, with the intention of proving his point, the salvation of the whole person with the Pythagorean and Platonic belief in the immortality of the soul. For the author this is a belief preliminary to the Gospel. The high place he gives to philosophers is even more evident when he bases his argument for the Resurrection on the teaching of the philosophers, in the process sharing the Platonic belief that God created the world out of pre-existent matter. <sup>2</sup> This belief is part of his argument for the truth of the Resurrection. Since the primal elements are eternal the flesh must dissolve into them at death to be remade by God at the Resurrection just as he made them at the creation,

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1. fragment on the res. 10. 2. See p. 33 above.

as a craftsman, for example, remakes some artefact that is broken up.<sup>1</sup>

' And shall not God be able to collect again the decomposed members of the flesh and make the same body as was formerly produced by him? '<sup>2</sup>

The author produces an elegant and persuasive argument, depending as much on the philosophers and natural reason as on the New Testament, that the risen body of Jesus and our body at our rising will be as fleshly and real as the body that died. In the end of the argument there is no room for the ambiguities about the nature of the risen body that we find in the gospels. The author shows that the belief of the Church is that which subsequently appeared in the early creeds i.e. that Jesus who was crucified was raised from the dead. As to our Resurrection

' The Resurrection is the Resurrection of the flesh that died,' the salvation of the soul comes from the teaching of Plato and Pythagoras; the salvation of the body is the new element introduced by Christ who makes ' corruption incorruption.'<sup>3</sup>

In the surviving part of 'On the Resurrection' there are ten chapters. It is an indication of the author's use of arguments from philosophy that he quotes the new Testament only five times, that only two of these references have to do with the Resurrection, and that both of these refer to the familiar problem of levirate marriage and the Resurrection. He never quotes from 1 Corinthians 15, which represents a quite different understanding of the Resurrection although it shares with the author the widespread understanding that the Resurrection of Jesus is the prototype

1.cf. Gregory of Nyssa or.catech.8.

2.fragment on res. 6 cf. Augustine de civ.dei 22.17, 19.

3. fragment on the res. 10 This is a summary of the long passage that makes up chapter 10.

and assurance of the Resurrection of believers.

The teaching of 'On the Resurrection' is opposed to Platonism and we find no hint of the Platonic abhorrence of the flesh. The author's understanding of the risen body of Jesus and of the risen body of the faithful is strongly anti-Platonic, anti-docetic and materialistic.

It is convenient here to deal with the thought of Justin's pupil Tatian who was a member of the Church from his conversion in 160 until his departure from the Church into an extreme ascetic Gnostic heresy. He adds little to our knowledge of the early Church's understanding of the Resurrection of Jesus or of the future Resurrection of the faithful. Several references to Tatian occur in the Fathers but apart from his *Diatesseron* his only surviving work is his 'Address to the Greeks'. This work is a vigorous and biting attack on the arguments of the Greek philosophers. Depending only on his statement of the sovereignty and omnipotence of God and with very few references to the New Testament, Tatian puts forward an argument that could be regarded as irrationalist. Whatever happens to man's body after death, e.g. burning or consumption by wild animals, God 'when he pleases will restore the substance that is visible to him alone to its pristine condition.'<sup>1</sup> (Eusebius reports that the bodies of the martyrs at Lyons in 177 were burnt and the ashes thrown into the river to prevent the Resurrection of the bodies. There was clearly fairly general belief that this prevented Resurrection. Tatian, a few years earlier, is answering a point that has been put to him.)<sup>2</sup>

Tatian goes further than his master and denies the immortality of the soul,<sup>3</sup> but asserts that the soul is raised by God with the body for

1. Tatian ad Graecos 6.

2. Eusebius h.e. 5.1.

3. Tatian ad Graecos 13.



judgement, and suffers either punishment in immortality or glory. This is one of the first arguments where Resurrection is connected with judgement. At first it is believed that only the faithful will rise, then, by later writers, that all men will be judged at the Resurrection and then that the Resurrection is necessary so that men can be judged.

As noted above, Tatian adds very little to our knowledge of the early Church's understanding of the Resurrection. The new element is the rejection of any natural or philosophical argument and a sole reliance on the sovereignty and omnipotence of God. It is interesting that this irrationalist strand emerges next most strongly in the other writer who left the Church for an heretical group, that is Tertullian, who became a Montanist.

In Irenaeus (130-200) we find many echoes of the arguments of Justin. In his principal work 'Against Heresies' (his only other surviving work is the 'Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching') he deals with the heretical, particularly gnostic, variants of the Christian faith. Very early in his work he states the faith of the Church that 'Jesus rose from the dead' and the passion and the Resurrection from the dead and the ascension into heaven 'in the flesh of the beloved Christ Jesus our Lord'.<sup>1</sup> In 3.12.2 and 6 he gives an account of the speeches in Acts 2 and 5 which refer to the Resurrection of Jesus.

He does not deal directly with docetic beliefs until Book 5, but in passing he deals with the matter before this. It is a common argument against the Church that the body and the soul have different destinies. We have noticed the influence of Platonic thought in some parts of the early Church and the arguments of Irenaeus' predecessors.

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1. Irenaeus haer. 1.10.1.

Irenaeus deals with a new point. The gnostic argument is that the souls of the righteous 'repose psychically in an intermediate place.'<sup>1</sup> Irenaeus points out that since the soul is saved on account of the good deeds done in the body and the soul is saved only because it is righteous and faithful then righteousness and faith should also save the body. The discussion of levirate marriage and the Resurrection in 4.5.2 is, for Irenaeus, sufficient argument that man will rise. He also puts the familiar point that the Resurrection of Jesus is the assurance that the faithful will also rise.<sup>2</sup>

In answer to the docetic assertion that Jesus was a man in appearance only, Irenaeus uses arguments based on St Paul and the Gospels to assert orthodox christology.<sup>3</sup> It is a short step from these preliminaries to a full treatment of the subject in Book 5. To those who suggest that our flesh is unworthy of the Resurrection, the Platonic and dualistic argument, Irenaeus answers that since the substance of our flesh is increased by receiving the Eucharistic Bread and Blood it cannot be argued that our flesh cannot receive life eternal as a gift from God and become a member of Christ. This is membership of a body of real flesh i.e. Christ's.<sup>4</sup> He quotes from Ephesians 5. 30 in support of his point.<sup>5</sup> In this argument he continues the identification of the Church as the Body of Christ, the risen Body of Christ and the Body of Christ in the Eucharistic elements that we saw first in Justin. This 'Body of Christ' understanding of the Resurrection is developed by later writers.

The basic argument of Irenaeus is that an omnipotent God can do

1. Irenaeus haer. 2.29.1.
2. Irenaeus haer. 5.13.1.
3. Irenaeus haer. 3.18 & 22., 5.1.1. ff.
4. Irenaeus haer. 5.2.2. cf. Ignatius Trall. 10 & 11.
5. Irenaeus haer. 5.2.3. strongly anti - docetic.

anything, but this argument is not put forward with any of the baldness which we find in his near contemporary Tatian.<sup>1</sup> He deals extensively with every argument against a real Resurrection, but relies more on biblical support than either Justin or Tatian. The possibility that God can raise our bodies to immortal life is demonstrated by reference to the Old Testament examples of Enoch, Elijah, Jonah and the three children of Israel in the fire as well as by references to the passages from Isaiah and Ezekiel.<sup>2</sup> The fact of the Incarnation which he stressed in 2.29.1 is for him sufficient argument that our flesh will rise.<sup>3</sup> The familiar argument that Christ's Resurrection guarantees our Resurrection is slightly enlarged to show that Christ's undocetic Resurrection will guarantee our undocetic Resurrection. We are already prepared for incorruption by the spiritual gifts we have received.<sup>4</sup> The attempt by the heretics to use the passage in 1 Corinthians<sup>5</sup> tends to support their argument, a passage which is often at the centre of arguments between later writers and their critics, is vigorously opposed with the use of texts from the Sermon on the Mount. The heretics point to the text that 'flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God' as biblical proof of the fact that the flesh does not rise. Irenaeus' argument in response is a little thin at points as when, for example, using the passage 'Blessed are the meek for they shall possess the earth by inheritance'<sup>6</sup> he comments that flesh and blood does not inherit but is rather inherited by the Kingdom of God. He is more persuasive when he seeks to allegorise 'flesh and blood' to mean the ways of the world or conformity to this world.<sup>7</sup> This is a biblical and even Pauline interpretation of

1. Irenaeus haer.5.3.1.ff.

2. " " " 5.5.1.& 2.,5.15.1. cf.Is25.19 Ez.37.

3. Irenaeus haer.5.6 & 7.

4. " " " 5.8.

5. 1 Cor.15.50.

6. Irenaeus haer.5.9.4.

7. cf. Methodius res.13 Photius cod.234.5 & 6.

of 'flesh' but probably not justified in this particular passage.

He proceeds then to build on this allegorisation. Baptism is not a cleaning of the body physically but a turning away from the 'former sinful manner of life', the flesh.<sup>1</sup> In the end however he depends upon the Incarnation. If flesh could not be saved our Lord would not have come in the flesh.<sup>2</sup> It is upon the saving acts of God that our Resurrection depends. We believe in the saving of our bodies because of the Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus.<sup>3</sup> The saints who have suffered in their bodies will be glorified in them. The Resurrection will be the restoration of the whole earth in a kingdom ruled by the saints.<sup>4</sup>

Irenaeus uses biblical arguments to support his statements, and he is more influenced by them than any earlier writer. His vision of the Resurrection as the restoration of all things is an added biblical dimension in the development of a doctrine which has, hitherto, developed in an individualistic way as the thinking was conditioned more by the opposition of the philosophers than the biblical understanding. We shall observe this effect acting positively and negatively in Tertullian and Origen. His understanding of the Resurrection as the restoration of all things is expressed by the use of the word ἀνταρκαλιώσις<sup>5</sup>, the word used in Ephesians 1. 10. He also quotes 1 Corinthians 15. 22ff. and Romans 8. 21 which speak of the universal reign of God and the liberation of the whole creation. Although he argues strongly for the Resurrection of the flesh, he does not become as crudely materialistic in his discussion of the Resurrection of the body as do, for example, Tatian and Tertullian. His understanding is biblical, anti-gnostic and anti-

1. Irenaeus haer. 5. 11.

2. Irenaeus haer. 5. 14.

3. Irenaeus haer. 5. 31 & 32.

4. Irenaeus haer. 5. 34 & 36.

5. Eph. 1. 10., Irenaeus haer. 1. 9. 2. PG 7. 541A., haer. 3. 21. 10. PG 7. 955B  
cf. Origen comm. in Eph. 1. 10. p. 241.

docetic. He is as concerned, as any other writer, to counter the prevailing heresies but is the first one to do so in a truly biblical context. He moves away from the individualism of earlier writers and in doing so recovers part of the biblical perspective. We do not, however, yet have an understanding of the Resurrection of Jesus or of our Resurrection that takes account of the pluralism of the understanding of the Gospels or the subtlety of the Pauline understanding. The passages in which Irenaeus deals with contemporary raisings from the dead will be dealt with in the examination of miracles generally.

Theophilus of Antioch (2nd. century) in his letter to Autolycus adds nothing of substance to the debate on the understanding of the Resurrection. He is however the first writer to point to the raising from the dead of heroes of Greek history as examples of resurrection. The two examples that he refers to are Hercules and Aesculapius. <sup>1</sup>

The next writer who deals with the Resurrection is Athenagoras (2nd. century). Little is known of his life although he seems to have been an Athenian philosopher who became a teacher in Alexandria. It is thought that his work 'On the Resurrection' was written about 177. He is an able apologist and the first to attempt a sustained philosophical defence of the<sup>2</sup> Christian faith. In his work on the Resurrection we may conclude that he was not particularly successful but it is a brave attempt. His attempt to produce an argument for the possibility and necessity of the Resurrection<sup>3</sup> without a substantial justification of his premises a) that the creation of the world and man was by God and b) the much more questionable belief for his non-Christian contemporaries, that the body and soul are indissolubly united,<sup>4</sup> leads to the failure of his

1.Thphl.Ant.Autol.1.13.

2.Athenag.res.11 - 25.

3.Athenag.res.3.

4.Athenag.res.18.20 - 22.

attempt to justify the Christian belief in the Resurrection by philosophical argument. Because his premises are theological and derived from revelation he is unable to produce a persuasive philosophical argument. He also fails in his argument in answer to those who ask about the possibility of those eaten by animals rising again because he falls into the common trap of natural philosophers of this period, that is a reliance on the tools of reason and argument rather than the tools of experiment, experience and observation.

Athenagoras ignores the illustrations and arguments of earlier writers and seeks to justify the Resurrection by drawing a principle of natural sequence from the growth of man from the human seed.<sup>1</sup> It is not the argument of Justin and others that since God can make man from the human seed he can raise him from the dead. It is rather that since the complexity of the human body grows from a seed we may safely proceed to believe in a natural progression to the Resurrection.

' As therefore in this matter though neither the seed has inscribed upon it the life or form of men, nor life the dissolution into the primary elements, the succession of natural occurrences makes things credible which have no credibility from the phenomena themselves, much more does reason, tracing out the truth from the natural sequence, afford ground for believing in the Resurrection, since it is safer and stronger than experience for establishing the truth. ' 2

It is a principle of argument that lets him down; if he had depended upon his earlier and more familiar argument based upon the omniscience and omnipotence of God, in the second chapter of his work, he

1. See p.156 above. 2. Athenag. res. 17.

would have been more successful. As it is he allows himself to be drawn into an argument about the problem of those who intentionally or inadvertently are the victims of cannibalism. His answer stands up to very little examination even by the standards of contemporary scientific observation.<sup>1</sup>

The question is that if a man is eaten by an animal and that animal is then eaten by another man, how will the first man's flesh rise since he is now part of the second man? This is the puzzle that Athenagoras seeks to solve and he does so by the argument that not all foods are digested but only 'suitable and correspondent foods'.<sup>2</sup> Unnatural or harmful food is rejected. This is a point made by Galen and other writers on medicine.<sup>3</sup> Athenagoras cannot show, however, why human flesh is not 'suitable and correspondent' for humans. It was known that fish ate other fish, and Stoics had argued that cannibalism is permissible in extreme necessity and natural because animals ate their own kind. Athenagoras moves from the moral proposition that many of his contemporaries accept, that cannibalism is not 'natural' in a moral sense, to the proposition that it is not 'natural' in a physical sense and that since digestion is a natural process human flesh would not be digested by humans. The argument clearly fails.<sup>4</sup>

The second part of his work is concerned to demonstrate the necessity of the Resurrection. He does not, this time, attempt a philosophical argument but starting from the end and design of man and his descendants and the common nature of all men he argues that our Resurrection is necessary if we are to come to the end for which God created us.<sup>5</sup> He

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1.Athenag.res.1.

2.Athenag.res.5.

3.Galen On the Natural Faculties 1.12.,Grant p.241

4.Athenag.res.8.

5.Athenag.res.12.

adds to the argument that since all men must come to judgement it is necessary for men to rise in their bodies to be judged.<sup>1</sup>

The attempt of Athenagoras to present a philosophical apologetic for the Resurrection is not convincing and it is a project which is not tried again for a long time. He takes the first step in a dispute which is to rage fiercely among later writers about the nature of the risen body between those who teach a simple identity between the body that died and the risen body, and those who, perhaps more true to the mind of St Paul, assert the identity of the person without the same stress on the identity of the body. His attempt to deal with this question is not convincing although he points the way for the more convincing argument of Origen.

After Athenagoras the consensus of understanding about the Resurrection of Jesus and of all men breaks down dramatically with Tertullian of Carthage, the founder of Latin theology, at one end of the coast of North Africa, and Origen of Alexandria at the other end. (They were not strictly contemporaries. Tertullian had become a Montanist by about 207 when Origen was only about 15.) Before this there was a general consensus of belief about the Resurrection but with Tertullian we see the beginning of a wide division between his extreme materialism and the spiritualism of Origen. They are as far from each other as it is possible to be. Methodius of Olympus argues a biblically-based belief between the two extremes although his work is mainly a criticism of Origen.

The extreme difference between them occurs partly because of the situation in which each of the thinkers worked out his beliefs. Origen, the successor of Clement of Alexandria was a brilliant and creative

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1. Athenag. res. 18. cf. Tatian ad Graecos 6.



theologian who, released from the demands of constant apologetic,<sup>1</sup> (although his long work, 'Against Celsus', is clearly apologetic in purpose he is answering a different class of critic,) sometimes strayed beyond the bounds of orthodoxy in the originality of his speculative thinking. Tertullian was a vigorous and brilliant polemicist opposing docetic heresy. He was a lawyer whose training led him to work for victory over his opponents rather than to discover and express the subtleties of theological propositions.<sup>2</sup> We cannot therefore be surprised to find such wide differences between two men separated by only a few years and not too many miles.

Tertullian was the first Latin theologian and furnished the language and concepts of much of the subsequent Latin theology and his later lapse into Montanism does not prevent his writings from remaining orthodox in most respects.<sup>3</sup> His principal works on the Resurrection are 'On the Flesh of Christ' and 'On the Resurrection of the Flesh'. Both these works come from after his departure from the Church into Montanism. His understanding of the Resurrection expressed in these works represents the materialist understanding of the Resurrection at its most extreme. We find similar views less extensively expounded in other writers. According to Jerome Tertullian was a priest in North Africa who in late middle age embraced Montanism. He was born in about 160, became a Christian in about 195, was later ordained and became a Montanist in about 207, living perhaps until about 220.<sup>4</sup> It is not possible to find any difference between his pre-Montanist and post-Montanist doctrine of the Resurrection.

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1. Ramsey. Resurrection p.113.

2. Barnes Tertullian p.1. but see Barnes pp.22 - 29.

3. ODCC art. 'Tertullian'.

4. ODCC art. 'Tertullian'. Barnes pp.22 - 29. Jerome. de vir. ill. 53

We may begin with a very simple statement of the Catholic faith in a form very similar to the Apostle's creed. In 'On the Prescription of Heretics', a pre-Montanist work, we find his belief that 'he rose again on the third day.'<sup>1</sup> Tertullian's principal concern in his work is to press the case for a simple materialistic understanding of the Resurrection and this he does with great vigour and at length. It is, however, not possible to observe any significant development of thought beyond those earlier Fathers who argued the same case with less vehemence.

In his 'On the Flesh of Christ' Tertullian asserts, against the docetic heretics, that the flesh of Christ before and after his Resurrection is identical to ours. God has cleansed flesh and made it worthy of the Resurrection by entering flesh in His Word.<sup>2</sup> While he asserts that Christ's flesh is natural flesh and like ours in every way, he is not wholly free of Platonic influence when he writes of the soul as a separate entity without which the body is a carcass.<sup>3</sup> a point he makes again in another work from his Montanist period, 'The Treatise on the Soul' in which he defines death as the separation of the body and the soul.<sup>4</sup> In a criticism of the opinion of Plato, Democritus and others about the retention of the soul or parts of it in a body apparently dead (causing a delay in corruption and the growth of hair and nails etc.) he speaks of the soul as 'indivisible because immortal'.<sup>5</sup> Arguments from certain phenomena that might indicate the retention of the soul are dismissed and attributed to the omnipotence of God.

The central place of the omnipotence of God in Tertullian's thought is the key to his understanding of the Resurrection of the flesh, which

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1. Tertullian de praesc. haer. 13., de virg. vel. 1.

2. Tertullian de carne Christi 4.

3. Tertullian de carne Christi 12.

4. Tertullian de anima 51.

5. Tertullian de carne Christi 13.

6. Tertullian de res. carn. 30.3.

would be incredible if not foretold and worked by God. Tertullian usually prefers the dogmatic assertions of Catholic belief based upon the omnipotence of God to the more speculative conclusions of the philosophers. His attempts to justify the doctrine from scripture fail to convince because of the difficulty of choosing between literal and allegorical interpretations of the texts.<sup>1</sup> He argues the anti-docetic case for the flesh of Christ from his natural descent in the Gospels, but is less happy and convincing when dealing with the principal text used by his opponents: i.e. 1 Cor. 15. 50.<sup>2</sup>

He uses the familiar argument of the necessity of a body for judgement at the Resurrection with the flesh complete in every way.<sup>3</sup> His final statement continues to make his basic point, 'and so the flesh will rise again, wholly, in every man.'<sup>4</sup> For Tertullian there are no subtleties. Jesus rose in precisely the same flesh in which he was crucified. We shall rise like him and his Resurrection is the guarantee of ours.

Tertullian was an advocate against docetism, not a speculative theologian on the Resurrection. He was concerned to present orthodoxy in most materialistic form as a counter to docetism. He is concerned to win a victory over docetism and sets out to do so with as much vigour and with as many arguments as he can muster. He represents the school which depended wholly on the authoritative statement of the Church's faith at its most extreme. He does not use the arguments of philosophers to defend Christianity and is content to answer any criticism with the doctrine of the omnipotence of God, the doctrine which lies at the centre of his theology.

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1. Tertullian de carne Christi 22.

2. Tertullian de res. carn. 50.

3. Tertullian de res. carn. 14, 15, 57, 60 - 61.

4. Tertullian de res. carn. 63.

After the attempt of Athenagoras to defend the Resurrection by a kind of natural theology and Tertullian's oversimplified theology depending upon authority and the omnipotence of God, we come to the most subtle and imaginative of the early Fathers, Origen of Alexandria. He was the subject of bitter controversy after his death and of severe criticism, especially by Methodius and Jerome.

In Origen we find the first comprehensive theology of the Resurrection since St Paul. Until Origen there is, except perhaps in Irenaeus, little reflection of the cosmic significance of the Resurrection of Jesus. The doctrine has principally been understood as a guarantee that the faithful will rise as Jesus rose. The necessity of Resurrection was also argued on the basis of the necessity of a risen body for the final judgement. The principal concern, as we have seen, was the nature of the risen body, a concern strongly conditioned by the need to oppose docetism.

In Origen, and to a lesser degree, in his master, Clement of Alexandria, we find a recovery of a wider Pauline understanding of the Resurrection and a more subtle understanding of the nature of the Resurrection body. It is as though Pauline theology has been underground for a period and has surfaced again in Origen. Origen is at his least creative when subject to the 'exigencies of controversy' as in his work 'Against Celsus'. In 'On First Things' and his surviving commentaries he is able to develop his theology freed from the demands of controversy.<sup>2</sup>

Origen's theology of the Resurrection is developed in two ways; firstly the Resurrection of Jesus is understood to be the restoration

1. Ramsey Resurrection p.113. 2. The text of 'de principiis' only survives for the most part in a latin translation of Rufinus and has been subjected to substantial editing by him. Twigg Origen p.91.

and healing of the whole of human society; one could almost speak of a political doctrine of the Resurrection. Secondly Jesus is understood as the Resurrection in an exposition of the realised eschatology of John.

In 'On the First Things' Origen teaches that the risen humanity of Jesus has restored all humanity and healed the political structures of human society:

' And hence the only-begotten Son of God, who was the Word and the wisdom of the Father, when he was in possession of that glory with the Father, which he had before the world was, divested himself of it, and, taking the form of a servant, was made obedient unto death, that he might teach obedience to those who could not otherwise than by obedience obtain salvation. He restored also the laws of rule and government which had been corrupted, by subduing all enemies under his feet, that by this means (for it was necessary that he should reign until he had put all enemies under his feet, and destroyed the last enemy, death) he might teach rulers themselves moderation in their government. ' 1

In a church just emerging from an apocalyptic sense of separation from the world and its structures and not yet enjoying imperial protection, his theology of the Resurrection is truly remarkable. He escapes from the narrow concerns of his predecessors and understands the Resurrection as the event which heals and restores even the political structures that have hitherto been marred by sin.

His commentaries on the Gospels also go beyond the concerns of earlier writers. The Resurrection of Jesus is the Resurrection of the whole Church, that is of all those who are members of the body of Christ:

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1.Origen de princ.3.5.

' For the third day will rise on the new heaven and the new earth, when these bones, the whole house of Israel, will rise in the great Lord's day, death having been overcome. And thus the Resurrection of the Saviour from the passion of the cross contains the mystery of the Resurrection of the whole body of Christ. ' /

He continues with a mystical and allegorical account of the significance of the Resurrection of the whole body of Christ. The encounter with Christ is entry into risen life. It is clear from this passage that Origen speaks of a present reality in the life of the Church as well as an event recorded in the Gospel narratives. The Resurrection of Jesus is the defeat of the principalities and powers and the cause of universal salvation.

Origen's understanding of the Resurrection is Pauline, although he comes to a universalism which goes beyond anything in Paul. His universalism leads to his interpretation of the fires of hell which are a means of purification rather than destruction or punishment. He did not bring to his consideration of the controversy of the risen Jesus and the future risen body of the faithful the same breadth of understanding that he brought to his understanding of the cosmic significance of the Resurrection. He developed an understanding of the Resurrection body that avoided the crudities of Tertullian, although we must remember that docetism was not such a serious matter for Origen as it was for Tertullian. He rejects the crude materialism that we see in Tertullian, for example, on more than one occasion; e.g.

' We do not assert, however, that God will raise men from the dead with the same flesh and blood, as has been shown

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in the preceding pages; for we do not maintain that the natural body, which is sown in corruption and in dishonour and in weakness, will rise again such as it is sown. <sup>1</sup>

He is reported as speaking about casting pearls before swine and it is reasonable to assume some measure of intellectual arrogance towards the simple who made the majority of the Church. <sup>2</sup> His rejection of materialism is, however, only the prelude to his development of a Pauline understanding of the risen body. He takes the controversial passage at 1 Corinthians 15. 50 as support for his teaching that from the germ of the body which has died there rises a spiritual body. <sup>3</sup> He asserts the continuity of the identity of the person who rises with the person who has died in a passage which seems to contradict his rejection of materialism.

' If it is certain that we are to make use of bodies, and if the bodies which have fallen are said to rise again, - for only that which before has fallen can be properly said to rise again - it can be a matter of doubt to no one that they rise again in order that we may be clothed with them a second time at the Resurrection. <sup>4</sup>

But this is not a characteristic view of Origen. A little later he continues:

' But if it is true that these rise again, and that they arise spiritual bodies, there can be no doubt that they are said to rise from the dead, after casting away corruption and laying aside mortality; otherwise it will appear vain and superfluous for any one to rise from the

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1. Origen Cels.6.29. . Origen Cels.5.19

cf. de princ.2.10.3. and Photius cod.

235. 3.Ambrose de exc. frat.Satyri 2.60

4.Origen de princ. 2.10.1.

dead a second time.'<sup>1</sup>

The body will be a spiritual body 'not made with hands but eternal in the heavens.'

In his effort to avoid the materialism of earlier writers he seems almost at times to deny the Resurrection of the body altogether, but to conclude this is to take the later passage in isolation. He succeeds in teaching a genuinely Pauline view between the materialists and the Platonists.

When Origen does have to face the pressures of controversy his touch is less sure. His argument in justification of the Resurrection of Jesus against Celsus is unconvincing, depending as it does on the stories from classical mythology of risings from the dead.<sup>2</sup> The same uncertainty of touch is found when he faces the accusation of Celsus that Christians (though not all Christians) believe what is 'vile, loathsome and impossible' that is, that the dead will arise from the dead with the same flesh they had during life; Origen answers the question as though he himself held this view though he has rejected it in earlier works. He does not proceed to set out his earlier argument but meets the criticism and defends the view he does not hold in the way Tertullian<sup>3</sup> defends it; that is that God is omnipotent and can do anything.

He asserts the reality of the Resurrection of Jesus but avoids the stress on the material nature of his body that we find in earlier authors.<sup>3</sup>

Although Origen is less speculative and inventive when faced by controversy and criticism it is clear that his development of the Pauline

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1. Origen de princ. 2.10.1 cf. comment on

2 Cor. 5.1. in de princ. 3.6.4.

2. Origen Cels. 2.55. 3. Origen Cels. 2.20



doctrine of the risen body represents his main understanding . At one point in his argument with Celsus he is driven to express himself in Platonic terms but this is no more characteristic of him than his earlier acceptance of materialism. /

It was likely that Origen's understanding of the Resurrection should be considered docetic by those who depended upon more materialistic and conservative theologians for their understanding of the Resurrection.<sup>2</sup> An unsympathetic reading can easily interpret his understanding as docetic.

Two of his principal critics were Methodius of Olympus and Jerome. His understanding of the Resurrection was not, of course, the only grounds for criticism, although Methodius devotes a substantial part of his writing to a critical examination and refutation of Origen's understanding of the Resurrection.

Methodius' work 'On the Resurrection' and his 'Banquet of the Ten Virgins' contain his most substantial criticism. While Methodius is a sharp critic of Origen he is indebted to him for his method of allegorical exegesis. Indeed it is characteristic of both that they are either literalists or allegorists as it suits the argument, in the case of Methodius an argument that the Resurrection involves the body. In this argument he avoids the crudity of Tertullian, and is frequently nearer to Origen than to any of the earlier Fathers although in his concern to assert the Resurrection of the body he fails to do justice to some of Origen's arguments. It is not the whole of Origen's understanding that is criticised but rather one or two small elements in his teaching. He seems to set up the targets which, unsympathetically

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1. Origen Celsus 7.32.

2. cf Methodius pp 172 ff. below and Trigg  
Origen pp.109 ff.

interpreted, can easily be knocked down. He does not succeed in destroying Origen's understanding but rather a one-sided presentation of part of it.

At first sight his thought seems to be as materialistic as Tertullian's. The Resurrection will be the time when

' all our tabernacles will be firmly set up, when again the body will rise, with bones again and compacted with flesh. Then we shall celebrate truly to the Lord a glad festal day when we shall receive eternal tabernacles no more to perish or be dissolved into the dust of the tomb. ' 1

In his work 'On the Resurrection' he selects those points in Origen's argument that can easily be refuted. Origen's argument that the reference in Genesis 3. 21 is a reference to the clothing of the soul with flesh is easily dealt with, since, as Methodius points out, earlier passages, e.g. Genesis 2.23f. refer to flesh and bones.<sup>2</sup> He accuses Origen of allegorising in the wrong way to support his argument and his accusation is sound.

He proceeds to counter the Platonic view of the body as the fetter of the soul with a familiar argument.

' It is<sup>3</sup> evidently absurd to think that the body will not co-exist with the soul in the eternal state because it is a bond and fetters. ' 3

The effect of death is not the rejection of the body but the dissolution of sin. Methodius in turn allegorises the coats of skin as referring to sinfulness which is put on at the fall of Adam and Eve; death dissolves

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1. Methodius symp. 9.21.

2. Methodius res. 2.

3. Methodius res. 3.

sin not the body.<sup>1</sup> This is perhaps a clearer statement of an earlier comment by Irenaeus.<sup>2</sup>

' Now we have washed away not the substances of our body, not the image of our primary formation but the former vain conversation. '

His argument is not, however, consistent. In his attempts to illustrate the meaning of the Resurrection by the illustration of a flawed ornament which is melted down and remade he is using an illustration that contradicts his earlier materialism.<sup>3</sup> God will remake the body bruised and injured by sin. This is different from his understanding of the risen body in 'The Banquet of the Ten Virgins'. There the body is set up 'bones again and compacted with flesh.'<sup>4</sup> Here the image implies a more radical breaking down of material and restoration in a perfected form.

His argument is more convincing when he relies on Romans 8. 19-21, which speaks of the redemption of the body. He allegorises again when answering the question about 'heaven and earth passing away'. He suggests that this refers to the passing of the old way of life, 'for not "this world" but the fashion of this world passes away.'<sup>5</sup> Allegorisation is used when it is necessary to defend the faith of the Church. He cannot allegorise, however, when dealing with the text on levirate marriage in Matthew 22. 30 (and parallels) and his answer is distinctly unconvincing.<sup>6</sup> He suggests that 'as angels' refers to a similarity in being immortal, for man having been made as a man will not change into an angel. God has not failed in his creation, and man is not badly

1.Methodius res.4.

2.Irenaeus haer.5.11.2.

3.Methodius res.6. cf.Gregory of Nyssa or.catech.8.

4.See p.176 above.

5.Methodius res.8.

6.Methodius res.10 - 12.

made so that he will have to be changed. The phrase is taken to mean that as angels are immortal so man will be immortal, just as the sun and moon are alike in that they both shine. He is on surer ground when he returns to the point that he has made before that immortality of the soul is not the same as Resurrection and that the very word, Resurrection, implies a body to be raised.

His difficulty in dealing with the two problem texts of Matthew 22. 30 and 1 Corinthians 15. 50 has two causes. Methodius is in the materialist tradition which has developed in part to counter docetic understandings of the Resurrection of Jesus and of the faithful. His concern to counter docetism makes it difficult for him to interpret these texts. Secondly he tends, as do many theologians of this period, to examine texts in isolation from their contexts. Sometimes these texts are brought in to sustain some a priori understanding - e.g. a materialistic Resurrection. The effect of this is to prevent the development of a truly biblical theology.

He shows a surer touch when developing his understanding of the Pauline doctrine of the risen body although even this is very selective of Pauline material.<sup>1</sup> God overcomes corruption and flesh made corrupt through pleasure is delivered to incorruption by God's victory over death in the Resurrection. 1 Cor. 15. 42 must refer to the body since the soul is not corruptible.

The familiar argument that the Resurrection of Jesus bearing our body shows that the human body is capable of Resurrection and is a guarantee of our Resurrection is also used by Methodius to support his main point. Nor can he resist the familiar argument, first used by pseudo -

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1. Methodius res. 13

Justin, that if God can bring a human from human seed he can raise the dead. This has clearly become a familiar weapon in the apologist's armoury.

His argument so far has been the traditional argument. His importance, apart from the rejection of Origen's 'coats of skin' argument is his telling argument against the Platonic belief that the body is the fetter of the soul. His argument is subtle and turns the tables on the Platonists completely.

' That if the body was given to the soul after the fall as a fetter, it must have been given as a fetter upon the evil or the good. Now it is impossible that it should be upon the good; for no physician or artificer gives to that which has gone wrong a remedy to cause further error, much less would God do so. It remains, then, that it was a fetter upon evil. But surely we see that, at the beginning, Cain, clad in this body, committed murder; and it is evident into what wickedness those who followed him ran. The body is not, then, a fetter upon evil nor indeed a fetter at all; nor was the soul clothed for it in the first time after the fall. ' /

In answer to Origen's exegesis of 2 Corinthians 5. 1,<sup>2</sup> which he used to show that the body did not rise in a simple materialistic way, Methodius uses an allegorical and metaphorical interpretation. He takes this form of exegesis even further, perhaps to the point of complete distortion, in his treatment of Revelation 20. 13.

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1. Photius cod. 234.2. 2. See p. 174 n. 1. above.

' Consider he says (i.e. Methodius) whether too the blessed John, when he says, "And the sea gave up the dead that were in it: and death and hell delivered up the dead that were in them," does not mean the parts which were given up by the elements for each one? By the sea is meant the moist element; by hell (Hades), the air, derived from  $\alpha\epsilon\rho\acute{\iota}\varsigma$  because it is invisible, as was said by Origen; and by death, the earth, because those who died are laid in it; whence also it is called in the Psalms the "dust of death" Christ saying that He is brought "into the dust of death" <sup>1</sup>.

Methodius' argument, when the appeals to Paul and philosophy are ignored, is a simple argument based upon traditional anthropology i.e. that since a person is soul and body there must be a Resurrection of the body. Since he is not a crude materialist and since he agrees with Origen about so much and disagrees only about the substance of the risen body, it is hard to see why he attacked Origen at this point when there was so much else that was suspect. He only succeeds in generating a real ground for dispute by what is, at times, an almost perverse misunderstanding of Origen's argument.

He only slightly moderates Origen's spiritualised understanding of the risen body. If, instead of chipping attractive specimens from the Pauline quarry, he had sought to expound a truly Pauline understanding of the risen body it is hard to see how he would have differed from Origen. Even within the context of the debate the differences are very small. Methodius sets out to establish himself as orthodox against Origen without, except on one occasion, falling into the materialism of Tertullian. <sup>2</sup>

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1. Photius cod. 234.9.

2. Methodius symp. 9.2.

In Gregory of Nyssa we find a partial re-establishment of the theology of Origen and reconsideration of the cosmic significance of the Resurrection. His arguments for the necessity of the Resurrection are not, at first, immediately scripturally based but rather based upon a universalist belief in the final turning to good of all men; since all men will turn to good there must be a Resurrection.<sup>1</sup>

Later in this work (ch.xxv) and in his work 'On the Soul and the Resurrection' he depends upon the biblical examples of the raisings of Jesus, Ezekiel 37 and Psalm 104. 29 and 30. He also combines the traditional example of the miracle of human growth from the seed with more ingenious examples such as the phenomenon of mercury breaking up into small parts and then coming together into one piece again to make the familiar point that the elements - Gregory calls them atoms - of a dissolved and decomposed body can be reconstituted.<sup>2</sup>

While he agrees with Methodius against Origen over the exegesis of the 'coats of skin' passage, his conception of the Resurrection as the restoration<sup>3</sup> of our nature to its paradisial state, an understanding developed in argument against the materialist critics of Resurrection, is worthy of Origen in its breadth of vision. It leads him eventually to draw a comparison between the restoration of innocence at baptism, the foretaste of the Resurrection, and the restoration of paradisial innocence at the Resurrection. The risen man will be the man in innocence, in the prime of life; an understanding of the risen body that we later find in Augustine.

Gregory of Nyssa expounds, not always consistently, an understanding of the Resurrection that retains and develops the best of Origen's

1. Gregory of Nyssa hom.opif.21.

2. Gregory of Nyssa hom.opif.27 cf.

Augustine's similar point.de civ.dei 22.20

3. Gregory of Nyssa de anima et res. τῆς φύσεως ἡμῶν

ἀποκατάστασιν PG 45.156 C

thought on the Resurrection without the speculative extravagances that lead Origen into heresy. He is wholly orthodox and faithful to the Pauline understanding and, if we take the later Augustine as the final statement of the understanding of the Resurrection in this period, we may say that in Gregory of Nyssa we find a theology of the Resurrection that is more like the Pauline doctrine than that of the other Fathers of the East and West in our period.

Jerome adds nothing to the understanding of the Resurrection of Jesus or the Resurrection generally. Apart from his particular rejection of the theology of Origen he is, both in tone and substance, very similar to Tertullian, with a vigorous controversial style and a materialist understanding of the Resurrection that is positively anti-Pauline. In his letter to Pammachius in which he attacks the Origenism of John of Jerusalem he quotes a passage from John which is wholly Pauline and then proceeds simply to contradict the argument of the passage rather than to produce a reasoned counter-argument. He will not even allow the phrase 'Resurrection of the body', for bodies can be aetherial and not material. He will only accept as orthodox the phrase 'Resurrection of the flesh'. Such simple materialism is understandable in his pastoral letters where his principal concern is the consolation of mourners, although even in these he cannot resist polemics. He interprets the well known passage on the problem of levirate marriage and the Resurrection, 'like angels', to mean like angels in their glory, attacks the phrase 'Resurrection of the body' as 'prevarication and avoidance of the truth', and calls Origen

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1. Jerome ad Pamm. contra Jo. 23 ff.

2. Jerome epp. 75, 84, 108.



' an enemy of the Church ' and ' hateful to God'. At no point however does he go further than the understanding of Tertullian.

In Augustine (354-430) we can observe a marked difference between his first writings on the Resurrection of Jesus and the Resurrection of the body and his final beliefs expressed in the 'City of God' and 'Retractations'. Between his 'Faith and the Creed' (c. 393) and 'Catechising the Uninstructed' (c. 400) and the 'City of God' (413-426) and 'Retractations' (426-428) Augustine moves from a belief that is very similar to the teaching of Origen to a much more materialist belief, although its subtleties of expression make it difficult to locate confidently on a spectrum of belief about the Resurrection and the Resurrection body. If Book 13 of the 'City of God', the first to deal with his later view of the Resurrection, albeit briefly, was written in about 420, we can say that a major change took place between 393 or 400 at the latest and 420.

His statement of belief in 'Faith and the Creed' is in the tradition of Paul and Origen. After the Resurrection the flesh and blood will be changed into

' an angelic thing, there will no longer be flesh and blood but body .... All flesh is corporeal but not all bodies are flesh .... Among celestial things there is no flesh, but simple and shining bodies which the apostle calls spiritual but some call them ethereal. So he does not deny the Resurrection of the flesh when he says "Flesh and blood shall not inherit the Kingdom of God," but declares what flesh and blood are to become. If any man does not

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1. cf Jerome p.183 above

believe that common flesh can be changed into a nature

of this sort he is to be led on to faith by gradual steps. <sup>1</sup>

He justifies this belief by reference to the change from one element to another that is observed naturally; and it is this argument that he uses to oppose the Platonic belief that the body cannot go to heaven. As his view of the Resurrection body changes so too does his answer to Platonism. He easily answers the Platonist's theory on the weight of elements and the impossibility of an element of one order of weight existing in a medium of another order of weight; if birds can fly earthly bodies can exist in heaven. After a series of complicated arguments he resorts to the fundamental doctrine of the omnipotence of God;

' If then a lesser god or angel or demon had the power to suspend the weight of the liquid element in such a way that the natural properties of the water appeared to be changed, is it conceivable that Almighty God, the creator of all the elements, will not have the power to annul the heavy weight of an earthly body, to enable the revived body to live in the same element in which God has chosen that the reviving spirit should dwell? <sup>2</sup>

His review of 'Faith and the Creed' in *Retractations* 2. 17 quotes his earlier statement, which he says is based on 1 Corinthians 15. 50, and then proceeds to bring it within the range of his later more materialist understanding.

' But if anyone concludes from that that the earthly body we now have is changed into a celestial body by the Resurrection in such a way that it will not have its

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1. Augustine de fide et symbolo 24.

2. Augustine de civ. dei 22.11. cf. de civ. dei 13.18. earthly bodies exist in heaven by the power of God.

members as at present, and that there will be no fleshly substance, without doubt he is corrected by the example of the Lord's body. For not only was he visible with the same members after the Resurrection, but he could be touched; and he verbally confirmed the fact that he had flesh, saying, "Handle me and see; for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see me having." <sup>1</sup>

This is a very inadequate interpretation of his earlier words and clearly denies the substance and plain meaning of them, and interprets 1 Corinthians 15. 50 in a different way.

This brings us to his statement in 'The City of God'

' Thus all that has perished from the living body, or from the corpse after death, will be restored. And with it will rise all that remains in the grave, changed from the old animal body into a new spiritual body, clothed in incorruptibility and immortality. Even if because of some serious accident or through the savagery of the enemy, it has been ground utterly into dust and scattered, as far as may be, to the winds or in the waters, so that it has ceased to be an entity in any particular place, even so it cannot possibly be withdrawn from the power of the Almighty Creator, and "not a hair of the head will perish". The spiritual flesh will thus be subject to the Spirit, but it will be flesh and not spirit, just as the carnal spirit was subject to the flesh but was spirit and not flesh. <sup>2</sup>

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1. Augustine retractationes 1.17.

2. Augustine de civ. dei 22.21.

The mature Augustine believes that the Resurrection body will be a real body with real flesh which will be spiritual because subject to the Spirit. It will be a body in the prime of life with all imperfections removed.<sup>1</sup> Nothing of the material body will be missing but the material will be rearranged to overcome any defects.<sup>2</sup> Sexual differences will be retained with the familiar interpretation of Matthew 22. 29f., 'like angels' to mean like angels in immortality. He deals with questions about abortions and those who die as infants by reference to the omnipotence of God.<sup>3</sup> They will be brought to maturity in an instant by an act of God. The material bodies of men eaten by cannibals will be restored since they cannot be destroyed.<sup>4</sup> He avoids the complicated and unconvincing argument about 'unsuitable meats' that we find in Athenagoras.<sup>5</sup> Their bodies will be restored however dispersed.

Augustine's later understanding of the Resurrection is materialist without being crude and rests ultimately upon the doctrine of God's omnipotence. He has little to say about the Resurrection of Jesus as the first step in the restoration of all things. His understanding of the Resurrection is orthodox but although he quotes biblical texts it could not really be called biblical, lacking, as it does, the subtleties of the Pauline understanding developed by Origen and Gregory of Nyssa.

In their understanding of the Resurrection both of Jesus and of all men at the end of time, the early Fathers of the Church, with the exceptions mentioned below, become absorbed with the problems which arise from a discussion of the nature of the Resurrection body to the exclusion of

1. Augustine de civ. dei 22.16.

2. Augustine de civ. dei 22.17 & 19.

3. Augustine de civ. dei 22.13. cf. Tertullian de res. 57., Athenag. res. 14.

On the problem of cannibals etc. see Athenag. res. 4., Methodius res. 2.9 -

4. Augustine de civ. dei 22.20.

5. See page 166 above.

the cosmic and eschatological significance of the Resurrection of Jesus as the first fruits of the restoration of all things. The demands of apologetic conditioned the understanding of the Resurrection so that the focus of attention became the question of the nature of the risen body, a rich source of relatively fruitless discussion. In most of the Fathers the demands of apologetic lead to a neglect of the development of a theology which reflects the ambiguities and lack of materialism of biblical theology. The demands of apologetic therefore distorted the development of the understanding of the Resurrection and the distortion continued to the end of the period under examination here: Augustine spends time in the work which crowned his writing concerned with the same barren and irrelevant points that have been discussed many times before.

Only in Irenaeus, Origen and Gregory of Nyssa do we find understanding of the Resurrection which, by escaping from the pressures of apologetic, gives full weight to the cosmic and eschatological dimensions of the Resurrection of Jesus and develops an authentically biblical doctrine of the Resurrection.

The above study is not exhaustive but has dealt only with those who make a substantial contribution to the way in which the Resurrection in all its aspects was understood. Three major writers who consider the Resurrection are not included in the above study because their understanding of the Resurrection is shared by other writers who expound the understanding at greater length. Hilary of Poitiers does not deal with the Resurrection at any length. His principal point about the common restoration to innocence of the Resurrection and baptism is the same

point made by Gregory of Nyssa above. Ambrose in 'On Belief in the Resurrection' ch. 60, understands the dead body to be the seed from which the Resurrection body grows.<sup>1</sup> He also develops the understanding of the Resurrection of Jesus as the first step in the Resurrection of the whole cosmos, the understanding expressed by Irenaeus, Origen and Ambrose's contemporary, Gregory of Nyssa.

The many references to the Resurrection of Jesus in the homilies and commentaries of John Chrysostom add nothing new to the understanding of the Resurrection that we have examined.

The Understanding of the Miraculous from the Apostolic Fathers to Augustine.

The Fathers of the Early Church wrote and thought in a different context from the New Testament writers. For them apologetic, which was a minor consideration to the New Testament writers, was a more significant factor in the development of the understanding of the miraculous. The apologetic use of miraculous events raises the question of the historicity of the reports of these events. If a miracle is understood to be a manifestation of divine power received in faith then no objective account of the event can show the event to be miraculous and it can have no value in bringing to belief those who do not believe. If, however, a miracle is to have apologetic value it must be an event disclosing God's power to any observer, believer or unbeliever. Faith in the observer would have no part in perceiving the event to be miraculous. It would clearly be so to any objective observer.

We shall examine the way in which the Fathers in this period dealt with this matter and the problems that it caused. We shall see that the apologetic use of miracles raised more problems than it solved, and that such use caused the writers of this period to argue for the reality of miracles in the Bible and in the Church from the fulfilment of prophecy

1.cf. 1 Cor 15.35.ff. & Origen de princ.2.10.

and the perfection of life seen in the life of Jesus, in the history of the Early Church, and from the miracles written of in the histories of the classical heroes of Greece and Rome.<sup>1</sup> The apologetic weapon of miracles itself had to be defended, losing, in the process, much of its value to the apologist.

The problem of distinguishing wonders worked by non-Christians from miracles is also raised by the apologetic use of miracles and this problem will also be examined. The process of distinguishing between miracles and pagan wonders leads to the development of a theology of the miraculous which will be seen to be a development of the main biblical understanding of the miraculous.

We shall also refer to the exegesis of the Gospel miracles by the Fathers in this period. We come at the end of the period to the work of St Augustine of Hippo who in the development of a theology of nature provides one answer to the question which still dominates the consideration of miracles, that is the relationship of miracles to the order of nature.

While the Apostolic Fathers do not write about particular miracles, they make general references which indicate that supernatural gifts of the Spirit were found in the churches. Since such gifts included the working of miracles (cf. 1 Cor. 12. 10) we may suppose that references to gifts of the Spirit in the Apostolic Fathers included, among other things, exorcisms and healings.

Clement of Rome in 1 Clement writes *πλήρης πνεύματος ἁγίου ἔκχυσις ἐπὶ πάντας ἐγίνετο* 'a full outpouring of the Spirit on all'.<sup>2</sup> Ignatius in his letter to the Church in Smyrna writes

of a church which is blessed 'in every spiritual gift' and which is 'deficient in no gift'. *ἐν παντὶ χαρίσματι - ἀνυστέρηται οὐση παντός χαρίσματος* <sup>3</sup> cf. 1 Cor. 12. 4-11

The effects of these gifts showed them to be the work of the Spirit or of Jesus in the Church, and this became one of the tests by which

1. See page 197 below.

2. 1 Clement 2.

3. Ignatius. Introduction to the letter to the church in Smyrna.

Christian miracles were distinguished from magic. The miracles have the effect of reforming those who have seen them. Magic does not. Apart from these general references to the gifts of the Spirit present in the Church the Apostolic Fathers make no references to specific gifts or to reports of particular miraculous events.

The first particular references to miraculous gifts occur in Justin's Dialogue with Trypho. He mentions exorcism and foreknowledge and his language clearly indicates that he is writing of events which are at that time occurring in the Church. The power to exorcise demons is believed to be the work of Jesus in the Church.

' For we call him helper and redeemer, the power of whose name even the demons do fear; and at this day, when they are exorcised in the name of Jesus Christ, crucified under Pontius Pilate governor of Judea, they are overcome. And thus it is manifest to all that his Father has given him so great power, by virtue of which demons are subdued to his name and to the dispensation of his sufferings. ' 1

The exorcisms are therefore contemporary and a continuation in the eschatological community of the victory of Jesus over the powers of this age which he achieved in his passion. They are the fruit of Christ's final victory.

A further reference in Justin's second Apology makes it clear that Justin is referring to contemporary events.

' For he was made man also, as we have said, having been conceived according to the will of the Father, for the sake of believing men and for the destruction of demons. And now (Καὶ νῦν) you can learn this from what is under your own observation. For numberless demoniacs throughout the whole world and in your city, many of our Christian men



exorcising them in the name of Jesus Christ who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, have healed and do heal, rendering helpless and driving the possessing devils out of the men, though they could not be cured by all the other exorcists and those who use incantations and drugs.

There is a nearly parallel passage in Dialogue with Trypho, c. 76,

' and now (καὶ νῦν) we who believe in Jesus our Lord, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, when we exorcise all demons and evil spirits we have them subjected to us.

Justin also refers to 'προφητικά χαρίσματα' which remain with us even to the present time',<sup>3</sup> and more generally to the spirit of healing and foreknowledge among a list of gifts which includes understanding, counsel, strength, teaching and the fear of God.<sup>4</sup> (cf. Isaiah 11. 2) Justin does not refer to any other, more spectacular, miracles.

We can see, therefore, that for Justin the exorcisms, healings and prophecies of the Church were manifestations of Christ's ministry in his Church and a continuation of his victory over the powers of this age. These manifestations also had an apologetic function, and since the Apology is addressed to the Roman Emperor and Senate we may assume that Justin is referring to well-known phenomena which if not authentic would soon have been shown to be false. The first apologetic use of miracles meets the test of historicity well. Justin must have been totally confident in his references. Any possibility that his references could be shown to be false would have rendered the whole enterprise futile. We can also see the first sign since the Church of the New Testament that Christian

1. Justin. 2 apol.6.
2. Justin. dial.76.
3. Justin. dial.82.
4. Justin. dial.39.

exorcists claim to be able to cast our devils that cannot be cast out by pagans. This, of course, implies that there were classes of demon-possession that could be dealt with by pagans. We shall deal with the Church's view of pagan healers below.

We also see the first patristic reference to what was to become a constant criticism of the miracles of Jesus by unbelievers, that is that he worked miracles by means of magic. Justin answers the charge in a way that sets a pattern.

' but lest anyone should meet us with the question "What would prevent the one whom we call Christ, being a man born of men, from performing what we call his mighty works by magical art and by this appearing to be the Son of God?", we will now offer proof not trusting mere assertions, but being necessarily persuaded by those who prophesied before these things came to pass, for with our own eyes we behold things that have happened and are happening just as they were predicted; and this will, we think, appear even to you the strongest and truest evidence. ' /

The miracles of Jesus are authentic because they were prophesied and continue in the Church.

Irenaeus has an understanding similar to Justin's. In a passage which compares the works of Christians and heretics Irenaeus observes that heretics

' can neither confer sight on the blind nor hearing on the deaf nor chase away all sorts of demons ... nor can they cure the weak or the lame or the paralytic or those who are distressed in any other part of the body. Nor can they

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1. Justin 1 apol.30 cf Mark 3.10 - 20.

furnish effective remedies for those external accidents which may occur. ' 1

He then breaks new ground.

' And so far are they from being able to raise the dead, as the Lord raised them, and the Apostles, by means of prayer, and as has been done frequently in the brotherhood on account of some necessity - the entire Church in that locality entreating the boon with fasting and prayer, the spirit of the dead man has returned and he has been bestowed in answer to the prayers of the saints that they do not even believe this can possibly be done, (and hold) that the Resurrection from the dead is simply an acquaintance with the truth they proclaim. ' 1

Apart from the relative impotence of the heretics in healings, exorcisms and raisings Irenaeus points to a further distinction, that is that Christians exercise their ministry for no fee and at their own cost and that those in need of healing encounter sympathy and compassion in the Church.<sup>2</sup> Irenaeus indicates that the power to exorcise these spiritual gifts comes after fasting and prayer, a preparation for the work of the Spirit which is mentioned e.g. in the Acts of the Apostles 4. 31 and 14.23. The healings are works of God's grace.

' Wherefore, also, those who are in truth disciples, receiving grace from him, do in his name perform so as to promote the welfare of other men according to the gift which each one has received from him. ' 3

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1. Irenaeus haer.2.31.2. 2. haer.2.32.4.  
3. haer. 2.32.4. cf the Egyptian monks and Apollonius of Tyana p. 265 above.

He also refers later in the same work to the gift of prophecy.

' We do also hear (ἀκούομεν) many brethren who possess prophetic gifts and who through the Spirit speak all kinds of languages and bring to light for the general benefit the hidden things of men and declare the mysteries of God .... ' |

Irenaeus claims to have personal experience of some of these phenomena and writes with great certainty of others.

' ... for some do truly and certainly drive out devils. ' |

( οἱ μὲν γὰρ δαίμονας ἐλκύνουσι βεβδίως καὶ ἀληθῶς ). In these cases he uses the present tense e.g. ἀκούομεν, ἐλκύνουσι, πρόγνωσιν, ἔχουσι.<sup>2</sup>

His language is not so certain in his reports of raisings. It is understandable that the verbs predicated of our Lord and the Apostles should all be in the past, but the use of the aorist when referring to the raisings in the Church may indicate less confidence or at least less personal knowledge. Even his assertion that those restored to life

'remained with us for many years'<sup>3</sup> is in the aorist. e.g.

the spirit of the dead returned - ἐπέστρεψε<sup>4</sup>

he has been bestowed - ἐχαρίσθη<sup>5</sup>

raised up - ἡγέρθησαν<sup>6</sup>

continued among us - παρέμειναν.<sup>7</sup>

This last comment in no way detracts from the force of his argument.

The raisings are only the most remarkable of a set of remarkable events which he reports with great certainty. Irenaeus argues with vigour that Christians are effective where heretics are not, but Christians are distinguished also by their freely given ministry born of compassion.

1. Irenaeus. haer. 5.6.1.

2. Irenaeus. haer. 2.32.4.

3. See note 7 below,

4. Irenaeus. haer. 2.31.2.

5. Irenaeus. haer. 2.31.2.

6. Irenaeus. haer. 2.32.4.

7. Irenaeus. haer. 2.32.4.

If any doubt that Jesus worked miracles exists he refers, as did Ignatius, to the prophetic voices which foretold the coming of the Son of God and that he would do miracles.

There are other reports of raisings but these are somewhat later although the sources of the reports are near contemporaries of Irenaeus. Eusebius reports that Papias of Hierapolis ( c. 60-130) described the resurrection of a dead person in his own time.<sup>2</sup> He also quotes from a pamphlet sent by Quadratus to Aelius Hadrianus in which he spoke of the survival to his own time i.e. c 90, of those raised by Jesus.<sup>3</sup> In view of the small number of raisings recorded in the Gospels it is difficult to be very confident of this report. It seems likely that a person raised by Jesus and living for a long time afterwards would have featured extensively in the literature of the Early Church. Apart from this reference in Eusebius there is no other mention in the surviving literature of people still living who had been raised by Jesus. The reference by Quadratus is, in any case, far from clear and as quoted by Eusebius may well refer to the survival of those cured by Jesus rather than of those raised by Jesus.

There is an unconvincing passage which refers to raisings from the dead in the treatise of Theophilus to Autolycus. Autolycus has said that he will believe in the possibility of people being raised from the dead if Theophilus will show him a man who has been raised from the dead. Theophilus' reply causes more difficulties than it solves. He replies,

' Many thanks to you for such a belief, yet you believe in Heracles and Aesculapius coming to life again. Perhaps I will show you a dead man raised and living and you will not believe this. ' 4

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1. Irenaeus. haer. 2. 32. 4.

2. Eusebius. h. e. 3. 39.

3. Eusebius. h. e. 4. 3.

4. Theophilus of Antioch. Autol. 1. 13.

Theophilus does not refer to any particular raising to prove his point. His reference to Heracles and Aesculapius raises the problem of belief in the power of the ancient heroes to raise people from the dead. The report of a Christian working such a miracle would show little more than that he possessed powers similar to those possessed by the ancient heroes. It would do little to persuade a pagan that he was wrong and that the Christian was right. Despite the fact that the argument can so easily be turned against them, apologists persist in justifying the miracles of the Gospels and the Church by reference to pagan miracle-workers. Certainly many of the Fathers, including Augustine, believed that the pagan heroes worked miracles.

In his general understanding of the work of God Theophilus, in a way similar to the Old Testament, makes no difference between the constant providence of God and his revelation in wonder-producing events. He sees the belief in the providence of God present in many Greek philosophers, a point he supports by lengthy quotations.

As we shall see, the Fathers of the Church develop this idea from time to time and point to quite normal phenomena in the life of the Church as being more wonderful than more spectacular events.<sup>2</sup> This has the effect of reducing the significance of the wonder-producing event.

We will examine the understanding of Tatian before examining the work of the first major Latin theologian, Tertullian. Tatian believed so whole-heartedly in the authenticity of contemporary miracles of healing that he believed that the practice of medicine and the use of herbs in healing are signs of infidelity. If material cures worked how

1. e.g. Minucius Felix Oct.27, Lact. div.inst. 2.8., Tert.apol.22., Augustine de civ.dei 10.16.

2.e.g. see pp. 210 and 216 below.

much more would the power of God be manifested in miracles of healing. He was particularly vigorous in his condemnation of the use of relics and charms to heal the insane and justifies his condemnation with an argument which is surprisingly rationalist for a writer not noted for rationality in matters of religion. Against relics he says

' how comes it to pass that when alive I was in no wise evil but now that I am dead and can do nothing, my remains, which are incapable of motion or even sense should effect something that can be known by the senses. , 1

By using material cures of any sort people are putting their trust in material things rather than in the power of God.

' For by their art they turn men aside from the pious acknowledgement of God, leading them to place confidence in herbs and roots. , 2

Tatian's contemporary, Tertullian, also believed confidently in the working of miracles in the contemporary Church. In his Apology addressed to the governors of Roman Africa he refers to these miracles, speaking first of exorcism.<sup>3</sup> He challenges the governors to bring a man possessed into the presence of a Christian and to hear the demon confess that he is not a god but a spirit. He is confident that the demon will submit to the Christian and so witness to his power. His challenge includes a description of a pagan exorcism in which the person possessed inhales the smoke from a pagan altar and then vomits out the demon that possessed him.

1. Tatian.ad Graecos 17.

2. Tatian.ad Graecos 17.

3. Tertullian.apol.23.

Tertullian is very familiar with exorcism and mentions it in many of his writings. In 'The Shows' he refers to the working of cures and other aspects of the Christian vocation.

' What nobler than to tread underfoot the gods of the  
nations, to exorcise evil spirits, to perform cures,  
to seek divine revealings, to live to God. ' 1

He believed that most men received their knowledge of God from visions and revelations although he believed that dreams were mostly the work of devils. 2

Tertullian's references to the raising of people from the dead are, unlike some of those of Irenaeus, not to contemporary events but to the raisings of Jesus and the Apostles. 3 He does not indicate that raisings have taken place since the times of the Apostles. 4

The ability to work miracles is given to the ascetic and his power to work miracles depends upon the purity of his life. It is this which distinguishes the Christian miracle-worker from the magician with his incantations and tricks.

' ... we renounce carnal things so that we may, at length,  
bear spiritual fruits ... by parsimony of the flesh you  
will gain the Spirit. ' 5

1. de idolatria 11. 196 or early 197  
de speculatis 29. 196 or early 197.  
de exhortatione castitatis 10. 208/209. Barnes. Tertullian p.55.  
Tertullian became a Montanist openly during 207. Barnes op.cit.p.40.
2. Tertullian.de anima 9.,47. Written 206/207. Barnes op.cit.p.55.
3. Tertullian.de anima 57.
4. Tertullian.de anima 58.
5. Tertullian.de exhortatione castitatis 10. cf.p.194 above.



By implication the working of miracles is the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church. 'The works of power attest the Spirit of God.' <sup>1</sup>

Tertullian is careful in his use of miracles for apologetic and particularly in his use of Gospel miracles. He gives a long list of miracles which reveal Jesus to be the word of God. He defends orthodox Christology against the gnostics by asserting that 'the Spirit did the mighty deeds in Christ while the flesh suffered ...' <sup>2</sup> The Jews could not, however, see the truth.

' As then, under the force of their own pre-judgement, they had convinced themselves from his lowly guise that Christ was no more than a man ... expelling devils from men by a word, restoring vision to the blind, cleansing the leprous, reinvigorating the paralytic, summoning the dead to life again, making the very elements of nature obey him, stilling the storms and walking on the sea; proving that he was the Logos of God, that primordial first begotten word. ' <sup>3</sup>

He is aware, however, that these powers could lead people to suppose that Jesus was a magician. He notes that the Jews believe this. He deals with this problem at great length in his work 'Against Marcion' 3. 3. Marcion accepts that the miracles of Jesus are enough proof of his divine mission. Tertullian disagrees. Their evidential value is denied on the basis of the words of Jesus in Matthew 24. 24, when he spoke of anti-Christ's performing great miracles.

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1. Tertullian.de exhortatione castitatis 10.
  2. Tertullian.adv Prax. 27.
  3. Tertullian.apol.21.

He showed how rash was belief in signs and wonders which were so very easy of imitation even by false Christs.

Nor was Christ exclusively given the power to work miracles. The best indication that Jesus was divine is that his coming was prophesied and the prophecy is necessary to support the evidence of miracles.

Tertullian understands well the limitations of the apologetic use of miracles, so that although, as mentioned above, he refers to the Resurrection of Jesus as a sign of his divinity, later in the same chapter he minimises the significance of the powers displayed by Jesus.

As well as his belief in miracles in the Church Tertullian is aware of the working of wonders by magicians who, he believes, control winged demons who, like angels, move about with great speed at the command of the magicians to produce effects very similar to miracles.<sup>3</sup> The belief in the power of magicians to work on the spiritual plane persists to the end of this period when we find Augustine speaking of the 'miracula magorum'.<sup>4</sup> In the face of this belief the Fathers of the Church were never able to place very much apologetic weight upon miracles although miracles continue to be referred to in apologetic writing. The witness of miracles is, however, frequently strengthened by the example of the quality of life lived by Christians and by the evidence of prophecy. In a world in which so many people were believed to work wonders an advocate as astute as Tertullian did not rely upon them too much as apologetic weapons.

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1. Tertullian. adversus Marcionem 3.3.
  2. Tertullian. apol. 21.
  3. Tertullian. apol. 22.
  4. Augustine. de civ. dei 8.16.

Tertullian's contemporary Hippolytus (c 170 - c240) was an important theologian of the Church in Rome who wrote in Greek. He may have had some slight influence on Origen, who reports that he heard one or two of Hippolytus' sermons when he visited Rome. His importance is the thoroughness with which he deals with the subject of wonders worked by magicians. In his work 'The Refutation of all Heresies' he examines the tricks of the magicians extensively. His examination taken together with some of the comments from earlier writers enables us to form a picture of the criteria used by the early Church to distinguish between magic and miracle.

He first gives an account of the methods of magicians and sorcerers and the incantations and tricks they use to achieve their effects including, for example, a description of the ingenious means by which writing is made to appear on paper.<sup>1</sup> He also describes the various means used by a magician to distract his audience's attention while he is performing a trick. Chapters 28 to 42 of Book IV of this work are, in effect, a detailed account of the way in which magicians work their effects.

He also describes the works of the disciples of Simon Magus and shows how they achieve these by tricks. He gives an account of Simon's history after his encounter with the Apostles. Simon ceases to be a Christian and instructs his disciples to bury him in such a way that he will rise again but 'he remained (there) until this day for he was not the Christ.'<sup>2</sup>

Unlike Tertullian he did not believe that the effects produced by magicians are of supernatural or demonic origin. He applies a devastating rationalism to these effects and demonstrates that they are conjuring tricks. His thought is startlingly modern at this point and he is the first of the Fathers to dismiss the belief that magicians possess

1.Hippolytus.haer.4.28.

2.Hippolytus.haer.6.15.

any supernatural power. His earlier exposition of astrological types in Book IV shows, however, that rationalism was not a universal feature of his thought. His rational treatment of magic if more widely accepted and applied might have solved many problems for subsequent apologists and facilitated a development of the understanding of the miraculous which may have excluded some of the more extreme forms of popular hagiography. His influence was, however, reduced by his participation in controversy and the suspicion that he was a heretic and a schismatic.

It is now possible to set out the criteria by which the early Church distinguished between magic and miracle. The criteria were not formally established but were applied in part or wholly when the problem of distinguishing between magic and miracle arose.

Magic was recognised by :

- a) the use of incantations, formulae and relics etc.; 1
- b) the ineffectiveness of their healings and exorcisms; 2
- c) the fact that magicians charge a fee for their work; 3
- d) the failure of their actions to produce repentance and conversion; 4
- e) the immoral lives lived by the magicians; 5
- f) the possibility of rational explanation of the effects produced although belief that magicians worked by controlling demons persisted throughout this period and after. 6

Miracles were seen to be acts of God because :

- a) the workers of miracles prepared by prayer and fasting; 7
- b) they were noted for the holiness of their lives; 8
- c) their healings and their exorcisms were effective; 9

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1. e.g. Arnobius adv.gent.1.43., Tatian

ad Graecos 17, Iren.haer.2.32.2 - 4.

2. Tertullian apol.23., Justin 1 apol.30

3. Iren.haer.2.32.2 - 4.

4. e.g. Origen Cels.1.68. 5. Origen Cels.

3.25. 6. e.g. Hippolytus haer.4., Origen Cels.3.33.

3.33. 7. e.g. Lives of the Egyptian 8. Clem.Alex.str.6.3.

Monks see p.268 ff, below; Tert. 9. e.g. Tert. apol 23., Arnobius  
de exhor.castit.10 cf.p.199 adv.gent.1.43.  
above.

- d) the miracles produced conversion and repentance as preaching did; 1
- e) the healings and exorcisms were performed freely out of compassion; 2
- f) the miracles of Jesus were authentic because they fulfilled prophecy; 3
- g) the healings and exorcisms could be seen as a continuation of the eschatological battle between Christ in his Church and the powers of the present age. 4

While the Church was anxious to distinguish between the work of magicians and thaumaturgists on one hand and authentic miracles on the other hand, and certain criteria for making such distinctions developed, it is quite clear that in many respects the methods used to effect cures in the Church bore remarkable similarities to the methods used by magicians and thaumaturgists. The method and effect of exorcisms, for example, are remarkably similar from times long before Christ to the present time. Oesterreich gives examples of exorcisms from pre-Christian times through to the 19th. century.<sup>5</sup> The similarities are obvious. Any culture or civilisation that believes in the existence of demons as the cause of mental illness and other problems deals with them in much the same sort of way and understands the process of exorcism as a battle between deities (or God) and malign entities.

Perhaps the most obvious example of similarity between Christian and non-Christian belief and practice is to be found in the work of Origen. In a consideration of name magic, traces of which may be present in certain New Testament passages, e.g. Mark 9. 38<sup>f</sup>, he propounds a theory of name magic which is as primitive as anything to be found in Christian literature. The passage is worth quoting in full :

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- 1. Origen. Cels. 1.68., 3.24, 25, 28., Clement. Alex. str. 6.3.
  - 2. Irenaeus. haer. 2.32.4.
  - 3. Irenaeus. haer. 2.32.4.
  - 4. Justin. dial. 39, 82.
  - 5. Oesterreich. Possession. p. 8 ff.

Then we say that the name Sabaoth, and Adonai and the other names treated with so much reverence among the Hebrews, are not applicable to any ordinary created things but belong to a secret theology which refers to the Framer of all things. These names accordingly when pronounced with that attendant train of circumstances which is appropriate to their nature, are possessed of great power; and other names, again, current in the Egyptian tongue, are efficacious against certain demons who can only do certain things; and other names, in the Persian language have corresponding power over certain spirits; and so on in every individual nation, for different purposes. And thus it will be found that, of the various demons upon the earth, to whom different localities have been assigned, each one bears a name appropriate to the several dialects of place and country. He, therefore, who has a nobler idea, however small, of these matters, will be careful not to apply differing names to different things ....

And I do not dwell upon this, that when the name of Zeus is uttered there is heard at the same time that of the son of Kronos and Rhea, and the husband of Hera and the brother of Poseidon and the father of Athene and Artemis .... And when one is able to philosophise about the mystery of names, he will find much to say respecting the titles of the angels of God, of whom one is called Michael and another Gabriel and another Raphael, appropriately to the duties which they discharge in the world according to the will of the God of all things. And a similar philosophy of names applies also to our Jesus, whose name has already been seen, in an unmistakeable manner, to have expelled myriads of evil spirits from souls and bodies, so great was the power which it exerted upon those from whom the spirits were driven out. And while still upon the subject of

names, we have to mention that those who are skilled in the use of incantations, relate that the utterance of the incantation in its proper language can accomplish what the spell professes to do; but when translated into any other tongue it is observed to become inefficacious and feeble. And thus it is not the things signified, but the qualities and peculiarities of words, which possess a certain power for this or that purpose. And so on such grounds as these we defend the conduct of the Christians, when they struggle even to death to avoid calling God by the name Zeus, or to give him a name from any other language. There are very few examples of similar name magic to be found in Christian literature. Tertullian refers to the power of the name of Jesus, as do many other authors, but none write about the power of the name in the same terms as Origen.<sup>2</sup> Theophilus of Alexandria accused Origen of having defended magic and it is hard to see how he can escape the charge on the basis of the passage we have quoted.<sup>3</sup> Despite his fierce dispute with the opinions of Celsus and his vigorous rejection of the charge of magic against Christians, the passage we have quoted is, or seems to be, an exposition of very crude name magic.

There is some similarity also between Christian and pagan practice both in the use of relics and the practice of incubation. Both methods are used by Christians and pagans as a means of healing. As we have seen there is some evidence, though not much, for a belief in the efficacy of relics for healing in both the Old and New Testaments. A similar belief is to be found throughout the period in both Christian and pagan circles and the belief has continued almost up to the present day. The blood of Roman gladiators and of Arab warriors was thought to have a healing effect<sup>4</sup> and as late as the 17th. Century there is an account of

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1. Origen Cels. 1.24, 25. 2. Tert. apol.

23, cf. Justin 2. apol. 6., Arnobius adv. gent. 2.12.

3. Theophilus of Alexandria ep. 96 PL 22.

78. 4. Thorndike Magic vol. 1. p. 581.

a healing effected by the blood of Charles 1.<sup>1</sup> There are accounts of of healing by relics throughout our period by Ambrose, Augustine and after our period by Gregory the Great and Cassian among others.<sup>2</sup>

The practice of incubation occurs in almost identical form in pre - Christian, patristic and contemporary pagan literature.<sup>3</sup>

The criteria for distinguishing magic from miracles that come to be accepted in the Church would, if applied to some of the beliefs and practices of the Fathers and the medieval Church, place those practices in the category of magic rather than miracle. Many accounts of medieval miracles cannot reasonably be seen as authentic developments of the Synoptic understanding of the miraculous or that of the early Fathers of the Church.

Before proceeding to examine the understanding of the Alexandrine school it is convenient to examine the work of some of the less prolific Latin Fathers of the 3rd and early 4th centuries, Minucius Felix, Arnobius and his pupil Lactantius.

The only surviving work of Minucius Felix is ' Octavius ', a defence of Christianity in the form of an argument between Octavius a Christian and Caecilius, a pagan he converts. He shows that he believes that exorcisms take place and, like Tertullian and others, that magicians worked their tricks by commanding the services of demons.<sup>4</sup> With several other latin Fathers he accepts the authenticity of miracles which are reported as having been worked by the heroes of pagan history.

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Apart from this small amount of fairly insignificant material he

1. Hutton English Saints p.349

2. Ambrose ep.22., Augustine de civ.dei 22.8., Gregory the Great ep.26.bk.1., Cassian Conference of Abbot Theodore 1.,

3. Hamilton Incubation p.109 ff.

4. Minucius Felix Oct.27

5. Minucius Felix Oct.27.



has nothing else to say about the miraculous and does not add to our knowledge of the understanding of the miraculous in this period.

Arnobius, who died c. 330, was concerned only with the Gospel narratives of miracles and does not refer to contemporary miracles in the Church. The only miracle outside the Gospels that he refers to is the victory of Peter over Simon Magus at Rome.

' The people of Rome hastened to attach themselves to Christian truth. For they had seen the chariot of Simon Magus and his fiery car blown to pieces by the mouth of Peter and vanish when Christ was named. ' 1

This spectacular event is not recorded anywhere else although Simon Magus is a common adversary of the Apostles and is constantly being defeated by miracles of the Apostles. These events are reported in some of the more extraordinary stories in apocryphal literature and in some of the Fathers. 2

The main concern of Arnobius is, however, with the defence of the miracles of Jesus. Arnobius first sets out to answer the charge that Jesus was an Egyptian magician producing his effects by magic. 3 Arnobius applies some of the criteria which had been developed to distinguish between magic and miracles, i.e. the effectiveness of the miracles of Jesus and the absence of incantations and formulae.

' Can you specify and point out to me anyone of all these magicians who have ever existed in past ages that did anything similar in the thousandth degree to Christ? Who has done this without incantations, without the juice of herbs and grasses ....? ' 4

1. Arnobius. adv. gent. 2.12.

2. eg The Acts of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul. A.N.F. vol. 8. p. 477

3. Arnobius. adv. gent. 1.43.

4. Arnobius. adv. gent. 1.43.

Their work, he points out applying another criterion, has a malign effect. <sup>1</sup>

The works of Christ were performed with no external aids and without formulae but by his own inherent authority in a way consistent with his nature, and his works were full of blessing for all. <sup>2</sup> The works of Jesus establish his authority, for no ordinary man can heal diseases simply by a clear command. Arnobius then gives a long list of Gospel miracles including Pentecost and the Resurrection appearances. Christ worked freely and gave his power to simple men.

' He chose fishermen and artisans and rustics. ' <sup>3</sup>  
This latter point is an important one in Arnobius' argument and he challenges his critics to

' effect, with the aid of their gods, what has often been accomplished by unlearned Christians by only a word. ' <sup>4</sup>

The earthquakes and the darkening of the sun at the crucifixion of Jesus and his Resurrection are evidence that he was ' God on high, God in his inmost word. ' <sup>5</sup>

Arnobius in a later passage, maybe indicating that the ministry of Jesus has been continued in his Church but the reference is not clear. From the context it seems, on balance, that this is not the meaning of the passage. <sup>3</sup>

' And we, indeed, have followed him in these things, these glorious works and most potent virtues which he manifested and displayed in diverse miracles. ' <sup>6</sup>

The burden of his argument is not that the miracles are found in the Church but that Christians are wiser to follow Jesus than the philosophers and the pagan gods because they are so much less powerful than Jesus.

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1. Origen. Cels. 2.49, 51.

2. Arnobius. adv. gent. 1.44. A point made in support of orthodox theology.

3. Arnobius. ad. gent. 1.50.

4. Arnobius. adv. gent. 1.52.

5. Arnobius. adv. gent. 1.53. cf. note 2 above.

6. Arnobius. adv. gent. 2.11.

Lactantius, like his master Arnobius, is mostly concerned with the miracles of Jesus. In only one passage does he speak of miracles in the Church and then probably only in the Apostolic Church.

' ... having arranged for the preaching of the Gospel throughout the world he breathed into them the Holy Spirit and gave them the power of working with miracles that they might act for the welfare of men by deeds as well as by words. ' 1

This passage shows the belief which is, by now, a common feature in the understanding of miracles, that miracles are the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church and that they must be understood as a way in which the Gospel was preached.

Lactantius is cautious in attributing apologetic value to miracles. Pagan heroes and magicians have worked miracles and yet are not God.<sup>2</sup> No one believes that Apuleius and Apollonius are gods and no one worships Apollonius.<sup>3</sup> Jesus is not a magician. Lactantius, as do many others, depends more upon prophecy, including even pagan prophecy such as the Sybilline Oracles and the Milesian Apollo, to demonstrate the authority of Christ.<sup>4</sup> It is more wonderful than miracles that simple followers were empowered<sup>5</sup> to lead the Church and to preach and that the Church flourished under persecution.<sup>5</sup> The mystery of the passion is more persuasive than miracles.<sup>6</sup>

Lactantius, in addition to his belief in the actual effects of the miracles of Jesus, understands the miracles to have a symbolic significance. He is the first of the Latin Fathers to use an allegorical exegesis of

1. Lactantius. ep. div. inst. 47.

2. Lactantius. div. inst. 2.8. .

3. Lactantius. ep. div. inst. 45., div. inst. 5.3.

4. Lactantius. div. inst. 1.6., 4.6, 13, 15. cf. de civ. dei 18.23.

5. Lactantius. div. inst. 5.3, 13. cf. Arnobius. adv. gent. 1.50.

6. Lactantius. div. inst. 5.3. cf p. 235 below.

the Gospel narratives extensively. The restoration of sight to the blind showed that the nations would have their eyes opened to the truth; the healing of the deaf that they would hear the Word of God.<sup>1</sup> He continues in this way through a list of the healing miracles finishing with the raising of the dead which symbolises that the secrets of death will be revealed.

' The actions which he then performed for the present were representatives of future things, the things which he displayed in injured and diseased bodies were figures of spiritual things. ' 2

This form of exegesis, which is not found again in the Latin Fathers until Augustine, was, as we shall see, more characteristic of the Alexandrine school. Apart from this important characteristic Lactantius is no innovator and he continues in the tradition of understanding of his predecessors in the West.

In the Alexandrine school the allegorical exegesis of miracle stories from the Gospels had begun much earlier. We find in Alexandria a generally broader and more speculative understanding of miracles than in Rome or North Africa, and in the writings of Origen a subtle and very effective apologetic.

In Clement of Alexandria there is only ~~one~~ uncertain reference which might refer to contemporary miracles but is more likely to refer to miracles in the Apostolic Church.

' ... the proof of our Saviour being the Son of God is the prophecies which preceded his coming, announcing him, and the testimonies regarding him which attended

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1. Lactantius. div. inst. 4.26.

2. As note 1 above.

3. cf. Floyd. Clement of Alexandria p.39.n.5.

his birth in this world; in addition his power proclaimed  
and openly showed after his ascension. ' 1

Clement shows little interest in contemporary miracles or in the miracles of the Gospels. He constructs a complicated allegory on the miracle of the feeding of the multitude but apart from one other reference he has very little to say about miracles and never uses them for apologetic.<sup>2</sup>

The one remaining passage in Clement which refers to miracles deals with the supposed plagiarism of Hebrew miracle-stories by Greek historians. Clement takes some care in setting out parallels to Old Testament stories which occur in the Greek classics. The significance of the reference lies more in Clement's preliminary comment that

' Almighty God in his care for all men turns some to  
salvation by commands, some by threats, some by  
miraculous signs, some by gentle promises. ' 3

Here he uses the Greek belief in the wonders worked by the heroes of Greek history to argue for the truth of the Old Testament miracles

' wrought by divine power from above by those who led  
holy lives, ' 4

and he demonstrates a remarkable universalism unmatched among his contemporaries which was, no doubt, the source of the universalism of his pupil Origen.<sup>5</sup> For Clement God is understood to be acting to bring men to himself in Greek history as well as in the history of the Jews and of the Church.

1.Clement Alex.str.6.15.

2.Clement Alex.str.6.11.

3.Clement Alex.str.6.3.

4.As note 3 above

5. This is anticipated in the Logos theology of the Apologists.

It is in his pupil, Origen, that we find a sustained apologetic and a more comprehensive understanding of the miraculous. Of his surviving works his great work of apologetic 'Against Celsus' and his biblical commentaries contain most of his treatment of miracles.

Origen believed in the occurrence of miracles in the contemporary Church and he refers to them in one or two places. The firmest reference is to

' ... not a few cases ... wrought in the name of Jesus  
and certain other manifestations of no small moment... '

Generally the other references are more tentative. He describes contemporary miracles as traces ( ἰχθυή ) of the miracles of the Apostolic Church and of the work of the Holy Spirit.

' .... the signs and wonders which we must believe to have  
been performed, both on many other grounds and on this,  
that traces of them ( ἰχθυή ) are still preserved  
(σώζεσθαι) among those who regulate their lives  
by the precepts of the Word. ' 2

He makes a similar point when comparing the Jews to the Church.

' For they no longer have prophets or miracles, traces  
( ἰχθυή ) of which to a considerable extent are found  
among Christians. ' 3

He also refers to traces ( ἰχθυή ) of the Holy Spirit preserved among Christians.<sup>4</sup> The signs present in the Apostolic Church have diminished but traces of them can still be found.<sup>5</sup>

We have, in the writings of Origen, the picture of a Church in

1.Origen.Cels.3.28.

2.Origen.Cels.1.2.

3.Origen.Cels.2.8.

4.Origen.Cels.1.46.

5.Origen.Cels.7.8.

which miracles are known but are thought of as traces of miracles which were present in the Apostolic Church. The sense is of phenomena from a past age which are still to be found among those who live an ascetic life after the precepts of the Gospel.<sup>1</sup>

These traces take a familiar form;

' They expel evil spirits and perform many cures and

foresee certain events according to the will of the Logos.'<sup>2</sup>

No indication is given of the 'manifestations of no small moment' that he refers to, but we may assume he is referring to the familiar works of exorcism, healing and foreknowledge.

Origen is not consistent in his understanding of the effects that miracles have on those who observe them. As we shall see below, he is extremely cautious not to place too much weight on the miracles of Jesus recorded in the Gospels.<sup>3</sup> The miracles are secondary to the witness of prophecy in showing that Jesus was divine.

When discussing the miracles of the Apostolic Church and of the contemporary Church, however, Origen places great emphasis on their converting effect. When writing of the Apostolic Church he suggests that the miracles were essential to the success of the first preaching of the Gospel.<sup>4</sup>

' For they could not, without the help of miracles and wonders, have prevailed upon those who heard their preaching of new doctrines and new teachings to abandon their natural usages ...'

The effect of the contemporary miracles is that

' many have been converted to Christianity as if against their will, some sort of spirit having suddenly transformed

1.cf. the miracles of the Egyptian monks p.268 below. 2.Origen Cels.1.46.  
3. See further discussion p.219 below. He does not doubt their authenticity.  
4.Origen Cels. 1.46.cf.Tertullian p.201 above and Hippolytus p.202 above

their minds from a hatred of doctrine to a readiness to die in its defence, and having appeared to them in a waking vision or a dream in the night. <sup>1</sup>

Origen writes with great confidence of these effects but does not expect to be believed by his pagan readers.

These passages and the belief in contemporary miracles and the effects which they reveal are not consistent with Origen's very tentative treatment of contemporary miracles both before and after these passages in 'Against Celsus' which we have examined above. As we have seen at one point miracles in the contemporary Church are understood to be the traces of an earlier miraculous age, rather like a few surviving species of animal. At the other point miracles are understood to be necessary and effective elements in the preaching of the Gospel. Origen does not resolve this inconsistency. <sup>2</sup> It is clear, however, that he believes that miracles are the work of Jesus or the Holy Spirit manifested in the lives of those who lead ascetic lives.

We can see developing a rationale for the diminishing experience of miracles in the life of the Church. We will see that on one hand the absence of miracles is explained by suggesting that the life of the Church is growing cold and that the Spirit is not so clearly present in the Church. The contrary suggestion is that the Church in its growing maturity no longer needs miracles to strengthen its faith. Origen uses both arguments although he favours the former. A fuller examination of this development will be made below. <sup>3</sup>

Although Origen speaks of 'wonderful miracles' (διὰ τὰς τερατοῦς  
 οὐράμεις)<sup>4</sup> he is never concerned with the merely spectacular aspect of

1.Origen Cels.1.46.

2.Origen Cels.2.8.,3.24,28.

3.See the discussion of Chrysostom and Augustine pp225 ff and 234 ff. below.

4.Origen Cels.1.2. cf also Cels.6.3., comm.in ps.4.8.



the miraculous. While he, no doubt, believed that miracles are more than signs, i.e. that they were also wonder-producing events, he never stresses this aspect. The basic significance of miracles for Origen, both miracles in the Gospels and in the contemporary Church, is their moral effect upon those who witness them. The miracles of Jesus, either in the Gospels or mediated through the Church, must be followed by the experience of conversion, which is in itself miraculous. Conversion 'from the practice of innumerable sins',<sup>1</sup> the production 'of a marvellous spirit of meekness and a complete change of character', are linked with the expulsion of demons and the removal of diseases as works achieved by the name of Jesus.<sup>2</sup> The moral effect of miracles is as important or more important than any other effect. The moral change which accompanies miracles and the holiness of the lives of those who work miracles in the Church are criteria by which the miracles of Jesus in the Gospels and in the Church are distinguished from the work of magicians.<sup>3</sup>

It is the moral effect of miracles together with the witness of prophecy that Origen refers to in his defence of belief in Jesus against the criticism of Celsus. He defends the divinity of Jesus and the truth of Christian doctrine upon the basis of the experience of the fulfilment of prophecy and upon the occurrence of miracles in the Gospels and in the Church. It is in his defence of the miracles of Jesus in the Gospels that we find a more tentative and careful assessment of their significance.

Celsus attacks the miracles of Jesus on the familiar ground that they were works of magic, a skill learnt by Jesus in Egypt.<sup>4</sup> This is an

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1. Origen. Cels. 3.33.

2. Origen. Cels. 1.47. cf. p. 230 ff.

3. Origen. Cels. 3.24, 25, 28.

4. Origen. Cels. 1.38.

argument that Origen disposes of quickly. If Jesus is a magician, how is it that he teaches a doctrine that forbids magic? When Celsus elaborates the point by comparing the miracles to the works of jugglers and illusionists Origen refers to the beneficial effects of the works of Jesus which were not done for show or for financial reward; nor can the power to work miracles be purchased as the skills of a magician can be purchased.<sup>1</sup> The miracles of Jesus led to moral reform. The works of the magicians did not.

Although at this stage in the argument Origen asserts that the effects of the magicians are produced by trickery he accepts later that there are those who work wonders by the manipulation of the power of demons.<sup>2</sup> He uses the widespread belief in the powers of sorcerers in a curious argument to justify the authenticity of the divine power demonstrated by Jesus. Before giving an account of this argument it is necessary to place it in its context.

Celsus is presented as running through a list of reasons why Christians believe in Jesus and by shaping them to his purpose he contrives to ridicule their belief; for example Christians believe in Jesus because he dies for them.<sup>3</sup> Should every person who dies, therefore, be regarded as Son of God? He makes the same point over the evidential value of miracles. Celsus also points to the passage at Matthew 24. 24 in which Jesus warns against false Christs working wonders. Origen answers the criticisms comprehensively with an argument that echoes earlier points. The miracles of Jesus are not sorcery because they were prophesied. The raisings are authentic because someone writing fiction

1.Origen.Cels.1.68.

2.Origen.Cels.2.51. cf.Tertullian p.201 above and Hippolytus p.202 above.

3.Origen.Cels.2.44,48.

would have put in more raisings than those recorded in the Gospels.<sup>1</sup> After referring again to the moral effect of the miracles of Jesus Origen suggests that the conversions and reforms worked by preaching were more marvellous than the miracles of Jesus. Jesus did not warn against miracle-workers in Matthew 24. 24 but against those who gave themselves out to be Christs. The power of Jesus is most clearly demonstrated when even sinners can work miracles in the name of Jesus.<sup>2</sup> Origen then sets out the argument referred to above;

' ... and we might further say in answer to the calumnies of Celsus, are those (things) to be regarded as miracles which are wrought through sorcery by wicked demons, but not those things wrought by a nature which is holy and divine? Does human life endure the worse but never receive the better? Now it appears to me that we must lay it down as a general principle that as where anything that is evil would make itself to be of the same nature with the good, there must by all means be something good that is opposed to the evil; so also in opposition to those things that are brought about by sorcery there must also of necessity be some things in human life which are of divine power. And it follows from the same that we must either annihilate both and assert that neither exists or assuming the one and particularly the evil admit also the reality of God. ' 3

This does not, of course, answer the basic point of Celsus who, it appears, accepts the miracles of God in the Old Testament.<sup>4</sup> Origen,

1.Origen.Cels.2.48.

2.Origen.Cels.2.49,50. cf. p.201 f. above.

3.Origen.Cels.2.51.

4.Origen.Cels.2.52.

in his argument, does nothing to show that Jesus is divine.<sup>1</sup> He is on safer ground when arguing from the moral effects of the work of Jesus and the holiness of the lives of Christians.

As we have seen, Origen has no doubts about the authenticity of the miracles of Jesus recorded in the Gospels.<sup>2</sup> These miracles are the work of the power of God present in the ministry of Jesus which is drawn down from heaven by Jesus. The powers also exist in those who believe.<sup>3</sup> Faith draws out and attracts divine power as magnetism attracts iron and naptha attracts fire. Matthew 13. 58 indicates that faith is generally necessary for the powers of Jesus to be effective but is not always necessary. Since Jesus 'could not do many mighty works there',<sup>4</sup> Origen believes that unbelief hinders but does not prevent the exercise of divine power. As we have seen he believed that miracles could not only overcome unbelief but had been essential to persuade people to accept Christian doctrine.<sup>5</sup> Faith is, however, necessary for an absolute demonstration of divine power but is powerless unless it encounters divine power.

His argument about the relationship between faith and the working of miracles is never consistent or wholly clear. It is not clear, for example, what constitutes an 'absolute' demonstration of God's power nor is the place of faith in 'attracting' God's power clearly expounded. The image of magnetism and naptha would seem to give faith a very significant place in the working of miracles. On the other hand, his comment on the value of miracles in persuading people to accept Christian doctrine seems to minimise the importance of faith in the working of miracles. He seems to be trying to hold together two incompatible understandings of the miraculous, an incompatibility which exists throughout the whole

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1. Origen. Cels. 2.52. The miracles of Jesus have Christological significance for Origen however.
  2. Origen. comm. 11.2. in Matt.
  3. Origen. comm. 10.19. in Matt.
  4. Mark 6.5 ff. and parallels.
  5. See p.210 above.

period under consideration and which is never wholly resolved. That he should demonstrate this inconsistency is not surprising. He was the most imaginative and perceptive biblical expositor of his time and he stood at the beginning of the period in which the more spectacular type of hagiography began to be written in which the effects of miracles are not as closely related to the existence of faith in the beholder as seems to be the case in the understanding of the miraculous in the New Testament.<sup>1</sup>

Naturally Origen applies his practice of allegorical interpretation of the Bible to the narratives containing miracle-stories.<sup>2</sup> The miracle of the feeding of the multitude<sup>3</sup> is allegorised to its last detail as is the healing of daughter of the Canaanite woman.<sup>4</sup> In his commentary on this miracle Origen makes, in a more developed way, the point that he makes in 'Against Celsus', that

' all cures that he works among the peoples especially those recorded by the evangelists took place at that time that those who would not otherwise have believed unless they saw signs and wonders might believe. ' <sup>5</sup>

He also makes a more subtle point which follows on from his allegorical exegesis of this healing and other healings and raisings which he associates with it. He believes that the miracles are symbols or types of the progress of the Gospel and the work of Jesus in the Church. The allegorisation of the miracles and the explanation of their symbolic significance is complicated and a brief exposition his theory of allegory and symbolisation is necessary here.

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1. See the section on Gregory Thaumaturgus and the Egyptian monks p.256 above.
  2. See p.221 below for a description of Origen's theory of allegorisation.
  3. Origen comm.11.1,3. in Matt.
  4. Origen comm.11.16,17. in Matt.
  5. Origen. Cels.1.46., hom.11.17. in Matt.

Origen's theory of allegorisation is explained at length by him in *de principiis* 4. The biblical texts have literal meanings which must be penetrated to reveal the true meaning;

' For as a man consists of body, soul and spirit in the same way does scripture. ' 1

Scripture has a literal meaning, the physical; a moral meaning that those who are pious can discern, and a psychic and spiritual meaning.

Origen gives it many names, the heavenly, the intellectual, the anagogical, the mystic, the hidden, etc. The ability to discern the spiritual meaning is a gift of grace. Origen asserts that all accept this level of meaning (*de pr.* 4.1.9.) but it is not discernible by the unspiritual.

(*de pr.* 4.1.10.) Chadwick in his article on Origen in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* explains Origen's understanding of the redemptive restoration of fallen creation from material to spiritual,

' from image to reality, a principle directly exemplified in the sacraments and in the inspired biblical writings, in which the inward spirit is veiled under the letter of law, history, myth and parable. The commentator's task is to penetrate the allegory, to perceive within the material body of Scripture its soul and spirit, to discover its existential reference for the individual Christian. Correct exegesis ... is the gift of grace to those who are spiritually worthy. ' 2

This method of allegorisation can be seen in his treatment of the miracles of healing upon those who come to Jesus on the mountain.<sup>3</sup> The mountain is understood to be the Church and the illnesses are spiritual ailments cured by the action of Jesus in the Church which in healing

1. Origen. *prin.* 4.1.11.

3. Origen. *Matt.* 11.17.

2. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*; 15th edn. vol. 13.

article ' Origen ' by H. Chadwick. See also J. W. Trigg. *Origen*, pp. 120 -128; and R. P. C. Hanson. *Allegory and Event*.

fulfils the Isaianic prophecies of the blind seeing etc. We find no real reflection upon the meaning of the miracles apart from the allegorical interpretation that he gives to the texts. <sup>1</sup>

The healings of the Gospels were healings of both body and soul. <sup>2</sup> The person who is healed is called to faith and conversion and it will be more tolerable for the people of Tyre and Sidon than for those whose hearts are not turned by the signs and wonders of Jesus.

Origen's innovation in the treatment of the miracle-stories is, however, not allegorical interpretation. We have seen above that this has happened before. His innovation is the degree of allegorisation that he applies to the miracle-stories. He is more thorough-going in his allegorisation than any of his predecessors.

In some of his treatment of miracles he gives a high place to the necessity of faith in the event. <sup>3</sup> He speaks of faith 'drawing out' the power of God. His understanding of the power of God at this point is not dissimilar to the understanding in the Synoptic Gospels where, at times, the power of God is spoken of as an almost physical reality which comes into Jesus and which he can feel leaving him. <sup>4</sup> The exercise of these powers by the Church is the work of the Holy Spirit or more directly the work of Jesus and the miracles experienced in the Church are traces of the miracles which were done by Jesus and the members of the Apostolic Church.

His understanding of miracles as events which bring people to faith, <sup>5</sup> an understanding which is expressed with some force, is not wholly consistent with his understanding of the place of faith in the miraculous as

1. eg. Origen. Matt. 11.19., 13.3, 4.

2. eg. Origen. Jo. 6.17., Matt. 11.19., 12.1., 13.22.

3. cf. pp. 210 & 215 above.

4. Mark 6 and parallels.

5. Origen. Cels. 1.46.

we have noticed above. This inconsistency is not surprising however. It exists in the Gospels and throughout the whole of the period under consideration. Miracles are, at one and the same time, revelations of divine power perceived in faith and also enacted presentations of Christ's eschatological victory which call people to repentance and faith as the preaching of the Gospel calls people. The inconsistency is not resolved in the Gospels, in the work of Origen or by any subsequent thinker in this period.

Between Origen and the Eastern Fathers of the 4th Century the focus of theological thought changed. Apologetic was no longer the overriding concern as it had been in the 2nd and 3rd Centuries. Christology became the centre of the theological concern and the change affected the understanding of miracles. We have seen that they have been used in defence of orthodox theology.<sup>1</sup> The working of miracles by Jesus in fulfilment of prophecy is now principally used as evidence of his divine nature.<sup>2</sup> This is caused to a large degree by the change in the relationship of the Church to the centre of authority and power in the Roman Empire

The Church after the conversion of Constantine in 312 A.D. is no longer a body which must commend its message to a potentially hostile world and which must defend that message against the criticisms and attacks of able and confident non-Christian opponents. The Church is secure from outward pressures within the bounds of the Roman Empire and can set about refining its message. The enemies of the Church are not principally pagans outside it but heretics within it.<sup>3</sup> Miracles now find their place within a different debate.

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1. e.g. Tert. adv. Prax. 27 cf. p. 201 below. 2. But this is implied earlier e.g. p. 200 f. above. 3. There were still pagan enemies of the Church e.g. Julian and Symmachus against whose Memorial Ambrose wrote epp. 17, 18. On the relationship between pagans and Christians see R. Lane Fox Pagans and Christians 1986. The main enemies now are heretics; Frend Christianity p. 554 ff.



At the same time that this change occurs there is also seen the beginning of a new sort of hagiography in which the miraculous element plays a very important part. It was perhaps inevitable that the stories of Christian wonder-workers and pagan wonder-workers should have some similarities in literary form. As the relationship between these two types of story lies beyond the immediate scope of this study, the genre of wonder-worker stories that are found in the literature of the Church will be examined separately below.

The two Eastern Fathers of significance whose writings survive from the 3rd Century, Gregory Thaumaturgus (213-270) and Methodius (ob. c.311) did not advance the understanding of the miraculous in their writings although the former was surnamed Thaumaturgus because of the spectacular miracles attributed to him in the life written by Gregory of Nyssa. Gregory of Nyssa, in writing this biography, demonstrates as well as anyone the growing division that is developing in the Church between the consideration of miracles in the context of Christological debate and the consideration of miracles in the hagiographical writing of the period. Gregory of Nyssa, as we shall see, makes very few references to miracles in his dogmatic writing but in his life of Gregory Thaumaturgus records the most spectacular miracles that could be imagined.

The increase in the hagiographical reports of miracles is not accompanied with an increase in reports of miracles in the contemporary Church. If anything the indications are that miracles are less frequent in the Church. We see this already indicated in Origen, by whom the miracles in the Church of his time are referred to as traces of those miracles which occurred in the Apostolic Church.<sup>2</sup> Eusebius in his history only quotes Irenaeus on reports of contemporary miracles apart from

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1. See the section on Gregory Thaumaturgus and Apollonius of Tyana pp.256 ff. below.

2. p.213 above.

reports from remote sources.<sup>1</sup> More significantly both Augustine and John Chrysostom not only indicate that miracles are less frequent in the Church but also develop a rationale to explain the decreased frequency of miracles in the contemporary Church.

Augustine, for example, in 'On True Religion' writes

' When the Catholic Church had been founded and diffused throughout the whole world, on the one hand miracles were not allowed to continue until our time lest the mind should always seek visible things and the human race should grow cold by becoming accustomed to things which when they were novelties kindled its faith .... '

He continues, however,

' On the other hand we must not doubt that those are to be believed who proclaimed miracles which only a few had seen for themselves and yet were able to persuade whole peoples to follow them. ' 2

He seems immediately to qualify his first comment and later in his Retractations qualifies it even more.

' But I should not be understood to mean that today no miracles are believed to happen in the name of Christ. ' 3

He continues in the Retractations with a reference to the healing of a blind man at a martyr's tomb in Milan. Passages in the Confessions and in The City of God also indicate that Augustine gave credence to reports of contemporary or near contemporary miracles in the Church.<sup>4</sup>

John Chrysostom in his homilies on Matthew's Gospel makes a comment very similar to Augustine's in 'On True Religion'. After referring to

1. Eusebius. h. e. 5.7.

2. Augustine. de vera religione 25 (47).

3. Augustine. retractationes 1.18.7.

4. Augustine. de civ. dei 12.8. confessiones 8.6.

miracles that were once witnessed he continues,

' but afterwards they were stopped when in all countries  
true religion had taken root. ' 1

In a short comment in 'On the Priesthood' he refers to the limited power of his contemporaries to work miracles.

' But men of the present day, if they were all collected  
together in one place would not be able, with infinite  
prayers and tears, to do the wonders that were once  
done by the handkerchief of St Paul. ' 2

His comment in Matthew 32. 11 is even more direct in its reference to the cessation of miracles. A rationale for their cessation is also given.

The evidence is uneven. There are a few comments that indicate that miracles had ceased or become very infrequent by the last quarter of the 4th Century. These comments are, as we have seen, supported by a rationale of the observation. At the same time we find the growth of hagiographies which contain reports of spectacular miracles. Such reports occur in other works such as 'The City of God'.<sup>3</sup> The reports of spectacular miracles are more numerous than the comments that miracles have become rare or have ceased altogether.

A number of interrelated considerations may place this conflict in a wider context and help us to a tentative conclusion. The first consideration to which reference has already been made is that the writers of the 4th Century were more concerned with the building up and consolidation of the Church and with the demands of Christological controversy than with apologetic. The targets of controversial writing are heretics rather than pagans. The kind of charismatic gifts reported as present

1.Chrysostom.hom.4.2.in Mt.

2.Chrysostom.sac.4.6.

3.Augustine. de civ.dei 22.8. for example

in the Church in the 1st and 2nd Century are not in dispute. The truth of orthodoxy against heresy can perhaps be very well supported by reports of spectacular miracles worked by acknowledged pillars of orthodoxy such as Gregory Thaumaturgus. Miracle-working powers are limited to thaumaturgists who are usually great ascetics. The Church is no longer the Church in which a full measure of the Spirit has been poured out on all.<sup>1</sup> Miracles are removed from the immediate experience of the faithful and become the preserve of the miracle-worker. They are now known by report rather than by experience. There is change in the perception of the miraculous.

The two changes mentioned above, i.e. the absence of the miraculous from the experience of the faithful and the reports of miraculous powers of a very spectacular nature considered as an authentication of orthodox theologians, began as a fundamental change took place in the outward condition of the Church, that is, the conversion of Constantine and the consequent establishment of the Church in the life of the Roman Empire. The process by which the Church changed from being a Spirit-filled community awaiting the second coming of the Messiah in the 1st Century to being a more established part of society was completed by the conversion of Constantine. The Church then begins to live within a different time-scale with different expectations, with a different perception of the nature of its work and a consequently different understanding of the way it should do its work. This set of changes involve a different understanding of the work of the Spirit and a diminished openness to the more spectacular gifts of the Spirit.

Clearly such a generalisation must be tentative. It may be supported by the similarity between this effect and the effect which occurs

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1. See above p. 190

in the Old Testament literature when the perception of God's imminent activity decreases and there is a greater concentration on the more spectacular manifestations of the miraculous.<sup>1</sup> A consideration of whether this development is a literary phenomenon, or a function of the quality of the spiritual life of the faithful, or is to be understood as part of the course of God's dealing with the Church, is beyond the scope of this study.

The second consideration is that, as the understanding of the miraculous changes to concentrate on the more spectacular aspects of miracles, the concept of miracle also moves in the other direction and we find that quite normal phenomena in the life of the Church such as repentance, conversion and the leading of a holy life are thought to be miraculous. Celibacy, for example, is called *σημειον* by Athanasius,<sup>2</sup> and the thirst for wonderful events is increasingly met with the observation that spiritual and moral qualities are as wonderful and miraculous as events which produce wonder and are to be preferred to such events.<sup>3</sup> There is a clear indication in many of the Fathers that an absorption with the spectacular has become a distraction from the more mundane but important aspect of Christian living, that is holiness of life.

We can observe in this period that the integrity of the concept of what is a miracle is beginning to break up. At one extreme it refers to moving mountains and diverting streams,<sup>4</sup> and at the other extreme it loses its normal meaning of producing wonder altogether as it is applied to those personal qualities which are to be found among the faithful.<sup>5</sup>

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1. See above p.25 and Dodds Anxiety pp.53 ff, p.84. 2. Athanasius ep.ad Drac. 49.7. The context indicates that *σημειον* should in this case be translated as 'miracle'. 3. See p.235 below. 4.e.g.The Life of Gregory Thaumaturgus p.257 below. 5.Seep.235 below.

This extreme flexibility in the use of these words causes no little confusion in seeking to understand the way in which the Fathers understood the miraculous. As we shall see below when this question is more fully examined, there is no single consistent definition for any of the words used. We may also conclude that the flexibility of definition is a reflection of the great flexibility of understanding that existed.

The third consideration that is significant in coming to a conclusion about the contradictions that there appear to be over the frequency of contemporary miracles in this period is the ritualisation of one of the principal charismatic gifts, that is exorcism. With the decline in the reports of exorcism as a charismatic gift there comes an increase in comment about exorcism as one of the stages in Christian initiation. This comment is made most clearly in the works of Cyril of Jerusalem. Exorcism is a formal liturgical act to which Cyril gives the greatest importance.

Let thy feet hasten to the Catechisings, receive with earnestness the Exorcisms; for whether thou art breathed upon or exorcised the ordinance is salvation to you ... as gold cannot be purified without fire even so without exorcisms the soul cannot be cleansed... Exorcisers infusing fear by the Holy Spirit and setting the soul on fire in the crucible of the body, make the evil spirit flee, who is our enemy, and salvation and hope of eternal life abide and henceforth the soul, cleansed from its sins, has salvation.

The catechism is anointed with exorcised oil (ἐλαίον ἑπορκίστον)<sup>2</sup> at his baptism and anointed again at the chrismation with ointment (τὸ μυστικὸν χρίσμα).<sup>3</sup>

1. Cyril of Jerusalem. protocatechesis 9.

2. Cyril of Jerusalem. myst. cat. 2.3., 3.2, 4. cf. cf. cat. ill. 1.5., 16.19, 22. Apost. Const. 3.16., 7.22, 42., Gregory Naz. or. 40. (On holy baptism.)

Gregory of Nazianzus makes a similar point.

' Do not reject the medicine of exorcism nor refuse it because of its length. This too is a touchstone of your right disposition of grace. ' /

Exorcism may have been performed by laymen in the 2nd and 3rd Centuries. The Apostolic Constitutions, which refer to exorcism by laymen and laywomen, may not be reliable, but similar references in Justin Martyr, Tertullian and Origen also refer to exorcists as laity who by prayer and invocation of the name of Jesus cast out devils.<sup>2</sup> By the time of Eusebius this charismatic gift has become a ritual performed by a man in minor orders after readers and sub-deacons.<sup>3</sup>

With these considerations in mind we can return to the contradiction we find in the Fathers of the 4th Century over the question of the occurrence of miracles in the contemporary Church. If we bear in mind that the comments about the rarity or even cessation of miracles go against a) the apparent desire for the reports of spectacular miracles (cf. the warnings referred to above) and b) the growth of such reports, it is reasonable to suppose that the comments were made to meet the experience of the Church and grew from this experience. They are, in a sense, unpopular things to say.<sup>3</sup> A priest preaching on S. Matthew would not go out of his way, as Chrysostom did, to speak about the rarity of miracles and even provide a rationale for this rarity unless this was the experience of his hearers. The same can be said of Augustine's comments.

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1. See note 1.p.229 above.

2. Justin.2 apol.6,8. Tertullian.de idol.11.,de anima 57.,de spec.26., de praes. haer.41. Origen.Cels.7.57. Apost.Const.8.26.

3. Eusebius.h.e.6.43.  
cf. canon 10 syn.Ant.in encaeniis.,canon 24 syn.Laod.

For this reason some weight can probably be given to these comments. The formalisation of exorcism, the increased references to the fact that holiness of life etc. is more important than spectacular miracles, the growth of reports of spectacular miracles perhaps to meet a demand for them, the second-hand nature of many of the reports, e.g. moving mountains, may support the view that the comments on the rarity of miracles were a true reflection of the experience of the Church in the 4th Century. The evidence is not, however, clear and it is not possible to come to more than a tentative conclusion.

The change in focus in the Church's attention meant that by the 4th. Century there was no need to defend the authenticity of the miracles of the Gospels. Those to whom the Fathers of the 4th Century preached and wrote had no doubts about their authenticity. The importance of the Gospel miracles was their value in the Christological debates of the period. The controversy strongly conditioned the use and the understanding of the miracles and is the occasion of the only significant conciliar reference to miracles in this period. The ninth Anathema of Cyril of Alexandria, endorsed at the Council of Ephesus, anathematised anyone who suggested that our Lord worked miracles by any power that was not his own.

Evidence of these controversies can be detected in much of the biblical exegesis in this period. A few examples of this genre will give a good picture of this type of exegesis.

Athanasius writes

' Being God, he became man and then as God raised the dead,  
healed all by a word and also changed water into wine. '

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1. Athanasius. ep. ad Serap. 4.14.



Cyril of Jerusalem writes

' The Christ was of two natures, man in what was seen but God in what was not seen; as a man truly eating like us for he had the like feeling of the flesh with us; but as God feeding five thousand with five loaves. As a man truly dying but as God raising him that had been dead four days; truly sleeping in the ship as man and walking upon the waters as God. <sup>1</sup>

As we have noticed this point was made by Tertullian.<sup>2</sup> It is also made by, for example, Leo the Great and Cyril of Alexandria.<sup>3</sup> This is clearly a very significant element in the understanding of the Gospel miracles.

Gregory of Nyssa writes of miracles as evidence of Christ's divine nature but regards them as less important than his goodness, which <sup>4</sup> Gregory believes to be more certain proof of his divinity than any miraculous power. The Gospel miracles are to be understood as a preparation of the people for the great miracle of the Resurrection.<sup>5</sup>

As mentioned above, the allegorical and symbolical exegesis continues. Ephraem Syrus in his third hymn on the Nativity allegorises the feeding of the <sup>3</sup> five thousand in the tradition of the Alexandrine school.<sup>6</sup> Ephraem also allegorises the healing miracles in ways which are almost identical to the work of Lactantius in the West sixty years before.<sup>7</sup>

Before examining in detail the understanding of the miraculous in John Chrysostom and Augustine, it is convenient briefly to examine the understanding of the relationship between divine providence and the

1.Cyril of Jerusalem cat.ill.4.9.

2.Tert.adv.Prax.27 This is also implied in Origen.

3.Leo the Great ep.28 ( The Tome ) 4, ep. 24.5,6. Cyril of Alex.anath.4.9.

4.Greg.Nyss.or.catech.11.13.

5.Greg.Nyss. hom.opif.25.5.

6.Ephraem Syrus homily on the sinful woman, homily on our Lord 11.12.

7.Lact.ep.div.inst. 47, div.inst.2.8.15.

miraculous in this period. The doctrine of God's providence was not generally related to the miraculous. Augustine, for example, in his substantial treatment of divine providence in *The City of God* does not, at the same time, deal with miracles.<sup>1</sup> They are a separate subject. The Fathers certainly believed that everything that happened, illness, accident and recovery and so on, was within the providential rule of God. When, for example, Gregory of Nazianzus' sister was injured by maddened mules overturning her carriage and carrying her along, she recovers without the help of a physician whose assistance she rejects out of modesty.<sup>2</sup> The accident and her recovery are seen as the work of God's providence. A stronger indication of the relationship of divine providence to the miraculous is to be found in the belief that the wonders worked by pagan heroes were authentic miracles. It is not surprising to find this belief expressed in Augustine in view of his belief about the working of divine providence in the growth of the Roman Empire. The belief is, however, more widespread and can be found in Lactantius, Minucius Felix and Tertullian.<sup>3</sup> Such a belief does not seem to occur among the Greek Fathers.<sup>4</sup> This absence is particularly surprising in Origen, in whose thought a remarkable degree of universalism can be found.

There is a clear distinction in the mind of the Fathers between this providential activity seen at work in the Roman Empire or in the lives of ancient heroes and the works of magicians, who may work by manipulating demons, the most common view, or by conjuring. The works of the magicians are universally rejected.

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1. Augustine. *de civ. dei* 5.21, 22.

2. Gregory Naz. On his sister Gorgonia 15, 16.

3. Lactantius. *div. inst.* 2.8., Minucius Felix. *Oct.* 27., Tertullian. *apol.* 22. Augustine. *de civ. dei* 10.16.

4. Except perhaps in Clement of Alexandria; see p. 212 above.

The dilemma or even confusion over the occurrence of contemporary miracles and the ambivalent attitude generally towards miracles that marked the late 4th and 5th Centuries is nowhere more apparent than in the preaching and writings of S. John Chrysostom. The situation was not wholly different in the West, but the work of Augustine, viewed in retrospect, has the effect of giving a coherence and integrity to the Western understanding of the miraculous. This is, of course, something of a simplification even in respect of Augustine's work, as we have already seen. The dilemma exists but is lost sight of against the background of Augustine's theology of nature and miracles. There is no comparable theology in the East in this period.

The value of Chrysostom's work lies in the large number of his sermons that have survived. It is reasonable to suppose that in his sermons we have an example of the theologian seeking to interpret the experience of his hearers and taking into account their experience. We can, therefore, gain an insight into popular belief and experience. We can also observe a theologian dealing with the fact that few, if any, of his hearers seem to have experienced the miraculous. The existence of spectacular hagiographies and the ready acceptance of accounts of spectacular miracles indicates that there was a popular thirst for spectacular miracles.

An examination of his homilies reveals some confusion in his understanding of the miraculous. It goes without saying that he believed in the authenticity of the New Testament miracles. No one in this period in the Church doubted them. He gives, however, relatively little significance to them in his preaching. He states at one point that the miracles of Jesus reveal his Godhead,<sup>1</sup> a comment which echoes the Christ-

1.Chrysostom.hom.28.4.in Matt.

ological concerns we have observed in his contemporaries. Little else is clear or unambiguous. While he comments that the miracles of Jesus and the Apostles converted unbelievers and made proselytes, he also takes care to show that miracles are relatively unimportant and that they are inferior to many other gifts of the Spirit to be found in the Church. In his comments on this question it is possible to detect echoes of another debate, a debate which is concerned with the decrease or cessation of miracles.

His caution over miracles can best be seen by setting out in brief those passages in which his caution is most obvious.

a) Miracles are of no significance if the Christian virtues are not practised.<sup>1</sup> Miracles are inferior to obedience;

' If we lived as we ought the workers of miracles would be less admired than we are. '<sup>2</sup>

Suffering with Christ is more important than miracles; holiness is more important than miracles.<sup>3</sup> It is better to cast out sin than to cast out a devil.<sup>4</sup>

b) Miracles are, in any case, of minor significance and unimportant.<sup>4</sup> Miracles were not the cause of the holiness of the Apostles or of the devotion of the converts.<sup>5</sup> Miracles are unnecessary and prophecy is more effective than miracles.<sup>6</sup> (By prophecy, in this case, Chrysostom refers not to foreknowledge but to the proclamation of the word of God.) The possibility that miracles might be misunderstood or taken for magic makes them undesirable.<sup>7</sup> The gathering of the city of Antioch into one place or persuading people that a crucified man is the Messiah is a more

1.Chrysostom.hom.24.2.in Matt.

2.Chrysostom.hom.13.in Ac.

3.Chrysostom.hom.31.in Ac. A point made with great force.

hom.49.in Ac.

hom.6.in Eph.

4.Chrysostom.hom.46.3.in Matt. A point made with great force. hom.in Ac.51.

5.Chrysostom.hom.11,13.in Ac.

6.Chrysostom.hom.19.in Ac.

7.Chrysostom.hom.37.in Ac.

powerful wonder than a miracle.<sup>1</sup> At best a miracle can overpower and amaze someone but not convince them.<sup>2</sup> The effect of miracles is not very long lasting for the followers of Jesus who saw his miracles abandoned him at his passion.<sup>3</sup>

c) The function of miracles is to confirm teaching and to fulfil prophecy and they were used as an aid to teaching by Jesus.<sup>4</sup>

The references to the importance of miracles in the New Testament are far outweighed by references which seek to minimise their importance. The balance of comment is overwhelmingly on the side of caution.

As we have suggested above the situation to which he is preaching may well be one in which there are very few, if any, reports of contemporary miracles. His homilies interpret this experience with some skill. If we assume that his hearers are asking some such questions as 'Why are there so few or no miracles in the present day?', we can see that his comments which generally seek to minimise the significance of the New Testament miracles, about which there were no doubts, are a good preparation for the comment, examined above, that miracles have ceased or, at most, are very rare. He would hardly have preached sermons in such terms if his hearers were familiar with contemporary miracles.

He makes very few references to contemporary miracles himself. He refers to the death of Julian the Apostate and the miracles which accompanied it 'in our generation.'<sup>5</sup> There are other references to these events in Theodoret and Sozomen.<sup>6</sup> He refers also to miracles worked by relics in his Homilies on the Statues and typically sets out

1. Chrysostom. hom. 37. in Ac.

2. Chrysostom. hom. 26. in Ac.

3. Chrysostom. hom. 25. 1. in Matt.

4. Chrysostom. hom. 24. 2. in Matt., hom. 25. 1. in Matt.

5. Chrysostom. hom. 4. 2. in Matt.

6. Theod. h. e. 3. 20., Soz. h. e. 6. 2.

to minimise the importance of them.<sup>1</sup> For the rest of his treatment of contemporary miracles he is concerned to emphasise the danger of self-glorification for the miracle-worker<sup>2</sup> and also observes that miracles are to be worked by the anti-Christ.<sup>3</sup>

His treatment of miracles generally reveals a concern to show that miracles are not as important as popular sentiment would perhaps like them to be judging from the hagiography, and that there should be little concern at their absence.

Chrysostom's treatment of what is, in effect, the synoptic problem and certain problems about miracles adds nothing to our picture of his understanding of the miraculous.<sup>4</sup> He believes, with the other theologians whose work we have examined, that the power to work miracles is the work of the Holy Spirit in the miracle-worker.

We do not have, in Chrysostom's work, a systematic treatment of miracles or, as with others, a treatment of miracles as part of the systematic treatment of another topic or a piece of apologetic. We have a treatment of miracles in which the principal sense is that they are a problem both in the New Testament and in contemporary life, and that this problem can best be dealt with by an almost general practice of minimising their significance. The fact that his understanding of the miraculous is worked out in the concrete situation of preaching and that his work, for this reason, reached a wider audience than the less accessible writings of some of his contemporaries gives us a clearer picture than the work of any other Eastern Father of the period of the experience of the faithful. The picture is one of confusion and there

1.Chrysostom.stat.1.7.

2.Chrysostom.hom.4.in Thess.,stat.1.7.

3.Chrysostom.hom.3.in Thess.

3.Chrysostom.hom.3.in Thess.,hom.4.in Thess. cf.Augustine.de diversis quaestionibus LXXXIII.quaest.79.

4.Chrysostom.hom.1.6.in Matt.

is no reason to suppose that the ambiguities of Chrysostom's understanding of the miraculous do not reflect accurately the ambiguities which existed in the understanding of the Church at large; that is 1) a fascination with the wonderful and the spectacular, and 2) concern at the rarity or absence of miracles linked to the eternal desire to avoid obedience, repentance and the call to holiness and to pursue more exciting and less demanding aspects of religious life.

The only treatment of the miraculous in the Latin Fathers between Lactantius and Augustine of Hippo, with the exception of the work of Hilary of Poitiers, is material which is mostly hagiographical. Some of this literature will be examined below. The commentaries of Jerome add nothing to our knowledge of the understanding of the miraculous in this period.

Hilary of Poitiers reflects in the West the christological concern which so absorbed the thinking of the Eastern Fathers of the 4th and 5th Centuries. His treatment of miracles is therefore principally concerned with the evidential value of the Gospel miracles. Their value is that they show the Godhead of Jesus and the working of God's omnipotent power in the works of Jesus.

' The proof that he is God's son is that he does the works that belong to God's nature ... the Son performs the Father's works and on that ground demands that we should believe that he is God's son. ' 1

The miracles of the Gospels were simply demonstrations of God's omnipotence in his divine Son. They are no longer the fulfilment of the Isaianic prophecies or signs of the eschatological victory of the Messiah over the powers of this age. 2

1. Hilary of Poitiers. de trin. 7.6.

2. Hilary of Poitiers. de trin. 3.6.

There is little comment in Hilary on contemporary miracles. He sets them in an eschatological context but says little more.

' The fullness of the times which waxes daily, witnesses of Him; by the working of wonders the tombs of the Apostles and the martyrs proclaim Him. The power of his name reveals him. The unclean spirits confess Him and the devils howling in their torment call aloud his name. ' 1

His comments reflect the view that has become increasingly common, that is that conversion and faith are miracles themselves which are more significant than spectacular demonstrations of God's power.

' Consider and decide whether it were the greater feat to raise the dead or impart to an untrained mind the knowledge of mysteries so deep as he reveals by saying "In the beginning was the Word." ' 2

For Hilary belief in the miracles and the power to work miracles is less important than the miracle of orthodox belief.

' The heretics confess all (the miracles) and perish. ' 3

The argument that seeks to diminish the importance of both the Gospel miracles and contemporary miracles is now a common one. The evidence in the West leads us to the same conclusion as the evidence in the East.

#### Miracles and Nature

The study of the understanding of the miraculous has, until now, not included any consideration at length of one important factor, and that is the relationship of the miraculous to the natural order. We have postponed consideration of Augustine's understanding of the mirac-

1. Hilary of Poitiers. de trin. 11.3. cf. cf. Ambrose ep. 22.19.

2. Hilary of Poitiers. de trin. 2.13. cf. cf. Origen's comments p 212 above.

3. Hilary of Poitiers. de trin. 2.12.



ulous until the end because his work contains the most complete treatment of the subject in this period and forms a convenient conclusion to the consideration of the question.

One understanding of miracles, that of miracles as wonder-producing experiences outside the ordinary course of events, presupposes some criterion by which events are seen to be outside the ordinary run of experience and therefore wonder-producing. Such a criterion would be 'the ordinary course of nature', 'the ordinary run of experience'. Since effects were presumed to have causes and some effects were produced without any apparent cause, thus producing wonder in the observer, their cause was presumed to be the action of God. Miracles were therefore understood to be wonder-producing effects, the capacity to cause wonder being their essential characteristic. It is this understanding of the miraculous that is the source of the debate about the relationship of nature and miracle. If an event was believed to occur without a natural cause, what was the relationship of that event to the normal order of things in which events did have causes? It is anachronistic to call 'the normal order of events' the 'order of nature' as we now understand the phrase. Indeed the intractable problem in studying this relationship of miracles to 'the normal order of things' is that there was no single understanding of 'the normal order of things'. This normal order of things was referred to as 'nature' or 'the course of nature' or 'the order of nature', but there was not then, as there is now, a commonly accepted definition of this concept.

As we have seen in later Jewish thought there was an understanding that there was some regular order of nature but it is never defined.

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1. That is a physical universe in which every effect is believed to have a cause within the physical universe and that no effects are caused by causes outside the physical universe such as God or a demon.

Josephus speaks of 'irrational events which are greater than one could hope for (and which) are believed because of similar circumstances' but he does not define the boundary between rational and irrational events. The Judaeo-Christian tradition had little difficulty with these events, for whatever the course of nature meant it could not mean that the freedom of God was in any way limited. Everything is possible to God and no order or course of nature can prevent the activity of God. Philo did not develop a theory of the order of nature and his references to the order of nature never hint at any belief that such an order might limit the freedom of action of God in any way.<sup>2</sup> In his life of Moses he recounts the most remarkable miracles of the Exodus without any questions as to their credibility.<sup>3</sup>

Turning a river into blood, and turning the rod of Aaron into a serpent are to be believed because God can do everything with ease and God could 'find a track in the trackless because it is a characteristic of him for what is impossible for every created being is possible to him alone.'<sup>4</sup> The Life of Moses is filled with such comments. The miracles are child's play for God.<sup>5</sup> In a comment which we find repeated almost verbatim at the end of the period by Augustine, Philo points to the Creation as a greater marvel than any other.<sup>6</sup> The frequency of the wonders of Creation makes them familiar to us and so lose their power to cause us wonder; some unusual things which are really less wonderful impress us. Philo avoids consideration of some of the more difficult miracles of the Old Testament such as the speech of Balaam's ass and the sun standing still or moving back and the miracles of Elisha and Elijah.<sup>7</sup>

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1. Josephus. ant. 4. 109.

2. Philo. Abraham 112, 175., de opif. mundi 46.

3. eg. Philo. de vita Mosis 1. 196.

4. Philo. de vita Mosis. 1. 174.

5. Philo. de vita Mosis. 1. 207.

6. Philo. de vita Mosis. 1. 212 - 213. cf. Augustine. In Jo. 24., de civ. dei. 10. 12.

7. Philo. de vita Mosis. 1. 269 - 272. This passage is allegorised in de cherubim 32 - 35.

The latter are never referred to.

The Greek philosophers had various understandings of a course of nature but no single, consistently agreed understanding. The Stoics, believing in an endless chain of causation, almost never applied the idea of a law of nature to physics.<sup>1</sup>

The law of nature means the moral law of nature, or nature means the normal form of a thing. Two examples will illustrate the latter point. Aristotle writes of heavy bodies which move downwards in accordance with nature and can be moved forcibly in other direction contrary to nature.<sup>2</sup> Themistius (320-390 A.D.) writes of 'natural things which are not in accordance with nature, such as animals deformed from birth.'<sup>3</sup> Simplicius, a 6th Century writer, makes a similar point in more general terms.

' We say that natural things are in accordance with nature if they have the perfection proper to them. But there are some natural things which are not in accordance with nature although they occur in accordance with the activity of nature, as with the case of animals born deformed ... '<sup>4</sup>

Neither of these two definitions comes near the modern definition of 'the law of nature'.<sup>5</sup> The use of the word by Origen, who might be thought to be nearer to Greek philosophy than most of the early Fathers of the Church, refers to conscience the things which the Gentiles 'who have not the law are said to do by nature'.<sup>6</sup>

There was an understanding that nature had a regularity , but this was not developed. Chrysippus, a Stoic, speaks of 'things which are contrary to nature which do not take place but seem to take place'.<sup>7</sup>

1. Grant p.4.

2. Aristotle. *Metaphysics*.iv.4, 1014 b 16 - 1015 a 19.

3. Themistius. *phys*.37.7.

4. Simplicius. *phys*.271.11.

5. Chadwick. H. ed. *Origen. Contra Celsum*. p.7.

6. Origen. *comm. in ep. ad Rom.* 2.9.

7. *S.V.F.* 2.938.

He also comments that 'nothing takes place contrary to universal nature'.<sup>1</sup> We may find here the roots of Augustine's later comment on the relationship of miracles to nature, but this is not a statement about nature in any modern sense, as Augustine's was not.

The sense of nature as a moral reality rather than a physical reality continues throughout the early Fathers. The laws of nature referred to the moral life and any suggestion that there was a physical law of nature which limited God's freedom was completely rejected. Tatian's vigorous dismissal of Greek astronomy is a good example of the rejection of any theory which either limits the freedom of God or which contradicts the Bible.

' ... I do not ... conceal that view of God which I hold in relationship to his government of the universe ... How can I believe one who tells me that the sun is a red-hot mass and the moon an earth? ... And what avails the Attic style, the sorites of philosophers, the plausibilities of syllogisms, the measurements of the earth, the position of the stars and the course of the sun? To be occupied in such enquiries is the work of one who imposes<sup>\*</sup> opinions on himself as if they were laws. ' 2

The only exception to this attitude towards nature is found in the 'Octavius' of Minucius Felix, who argues that the regularity of nature and the study of astronomy give proofs that there is a Creator with a design.<sup>3</sup> As his opponents develop their argument against Christian belief by pointing to the conflict between the regularity of nature and the Christian

1. S.V.F. 2.938. cf. Augustine de civ. dei 21.8. p.248 below.

2. Tatian. ad Graecos. 27., cf. Tertullian. de anima 2.2., Irenaeus. haer. 2.32.3., Justin. apol. 1.33.2., dial. 84.304.

3. Minucius Felix. Oct. 17.

belief in the freedom of God, Minucius Felix turns the argument around and argues from the same regularity of nature to the existence of a divine creator. We cannot tell from Octavius how far Minucius Felix agreed with his opponents about the concept of a law of nature or just what the concept meant to him, but it is clear that he takes the concept beyond that of a moral law of nature and begins to deal with the implications of a physical law of nature.

The Alexandrine school typically is more adventurous than the Fathers of the 1st and early 2nd Centuries and Tatian and Tertullian. Clement of Alexandria seeks to apply rational principles to the explanation of some strange phenomena and prefers Aristotle to Barnabas 10.6 over the annual change in sex of the hyena, although he believed the epistle to be canonical. <sup>1</sup>

Origen's position is more complex. As we have seen, nature is a moral reality and not a physical reality for Origen. However he is sufficiently aware of a physical order of nature to criticise those simple believers who believe that they should pray for the sun to rise, <sup>2</sup> that it rose because of their prayers, and that it is a correct understanding of the nature of prayer to pray for the sun to change its course. The regularity of nature <sup>3</sup> is understood to be the ordinance of God.

It is probable that God not only foreknows but also foreordains it and that nothing takes place for him against his foreordinances. <sup>3</sup>

He is unhappy with Marcion's stress on miracles, <sup>4</sup> and his allegorisations of

1. Clement of Alexandria. str. 7, 8. Grant. p. 197.

2. eg. Origen. Cels. 5.23., comm. in ep. ad Rom. 2.8., 3.6.

3. Origen. de oratione 5.3.

4. Origen. comm. Jn. 2.3.

miracle-stories imply some criterion by which such stories are thought to be or not to be credible.<sup>1</sup> The evidence leaves his understanding of the credibility of the Gospel miracles uncertain. He denies the possibility of an eclipse at the full moon and suggests that the account of the eclipse in Luke is inserted by those who are enemies of the Church,<sup>2</sup> but he accepts the feeding of the five thousand as true.<sup>3</sup> There are therefore inconsistencies in his treatment of these miracles.

When he comes to deal with miracles at a more theoretical level, he demonstrates some caution over the relationship between the order of nature and the freedom of God and resists saying that God can do anything.<sup>4</sup> Origen believes that God cannot do anything contrary to his nature, anything disgraceful, and seems to suggest that God's power is not limitless. He holds this view, not because limitlessness conflicts with the order of nature, but because the limitless is also incomprehensible and if God's power is limitless God could not comprehend it.<sup>5</sup> This argument clearly depends more on Neo-Platonism than on the Judaeo-Christian belief about the freedom of God. It does not reflect, either, any problem concerning a fixed order of nature and the freedom of God. This problem seems not to worry Origen. He resists saying that events outside the ordinary course of nature are contrary to nature. His phrase is ὑπὲρ τὴν φύσιν, beyond nature, and this is, perhaps, the first use of the idea of the supernatural by a Christian writer.<sup>6</sup>

The situation is somewhat confused by Gregory of Nyssa, who uses the language of Origen in the arguments of Tertullian.<sup>7</sup> The virginal conception and Resurrection of Jesus are convincing and show the divinity

1. Origen. comm. Jn. 10.5.

2. Klostermann in ZNW pp. 272 - 273, quoted by Grant p. 204. I cannot trace mention of this in Origen's commentary on Matthew.

3. Origen. comm. in Matt. 11.1ff. He did consider the general run of gospel miracles to be

4. Origen. de princ. 2.9.1., Cels. 5.23.

authentic; see above p. 214, 215

5. Origen. de princ. 2.9.1.

6. Grant. p. 206. Cels. 5.23. cf. μαίωσις τῆς φύσεως Gregory Nyssa or. cat. 13. PG 45.450

7. Gregory Nyssa. or. catech. 73. cf. or. catech. 23. on the novelty of Christ's miracles.

of Christ just because they are not in accord with nature.

' His birth and death were independent of the conditions  
of human weakness, in fact were above nature. ' 1

The conclusion, therefore, is that he who has thus been shown to have been born supernaturally was certainly not limited by nature. The argument that something is divine because it is above<sup>2</sup> nature or contrary<sup>3</sup> to nature does not define 'nature' for us. It is probably anachronistic to presume that 'natural' means more than 'according to the normal run of things' and that 'supernatural' means more than 'outside the normal run of things' and therefore 'caused by the action of God'. We have no evidence that the problem of the freedom of God and a closed system of nature is being considered and that 'above nature' means 'outside a closed system of nature'.

Chrysostom's understanding of the relationship of the freedom of God to nature seems to be basically the same as Gregory of Nyssa's. The arguments which he uses to support this understanding are, however, unconvincing. The miracle of the Exodus and the miracle of the survival of the three young men in the furnace are compared with the most natural of phenomena, the melting of snow into water.<sup>4</sup> He also compares, as does Augustine, the feeding of the multitude with the natural growth of grapes and the formation of wine.<sup>5</sup> The miracle is an acceleration of the natural process. It seems that Chrysostom is uncertain about some of these miracles and uses a combination of arguments to justify them, none of which is very convincing. He experiences great difficulty in coming to terms with the leaping hills of Psalm 113. 4.<sup>6</sup>

1. Greg. Nyss. or. catech. 13 cf. Ambrose de mysteriis 9 ( 53 )

2. **ὑπὲρ** e.g. Chrys. hom. 3.4. in 1 Cor. PG 61.28. Marc. Er. opusc. 2.83 PG 65.941C, Cyr. Alex. Jo. 1.9. Pusey. Oxford 1872 4.95 A

3. **παρα** e.g. Eus. p.e. PG 21.40A, Ath. gent. 32. PG 25.64C, Greg. Nyss. de it. PG 46.565 D

4. Chrys. exp. in Ps 147.

5. Chrys. hom. 22.2 in Jo. cf. Aug. de Gen ad. litt. 6.13., hom. in Jo. 9.1.

6. Chrys. exp. in Ps 113 ( PG 55.307 ) cf. the possibility that apostles moved mountains. ( PG 58.562 ).

He never reveals a very profound understanding of the relationship of the order of nature to miracles. He believes that they are in an order independent of nature and 'are far more perfect and better than the operations of nature'.<sup>1</sup> The uncertainty of touch which Chrysostom shows in his general treatment of miracles can be found in his treatment of the relationship of miracles to nature.

The understanding of miracles as above nature is developed by the Fourth Century author of 'Questions and Answers to the Orthodox' who may have been Theodoret.<sup>2</sup> Miracles are 'above nature' but take place within nature because of the divine power. Again he does not define nature. The interesting point that he does make is that miracles cannot be proved to be true by observation of nature. He does not go on to conclude that miracles are signs rather than wonders although the logic of his argument seems to lead that way. He is extremely sceptical about non-Christian miracles and dismisses reports of them as fiction.<sup>3</sup>

The great obstacle to progress in the understanding of the relationship of nature to miracles, which is not removed in this period, is the absence of a clear definition and understanding of what is meant by 'nature' or 'the laws of nature'. Clearly some standard by which the ordinary course of events was judged existed in the minds of those who considered the matter and who defined miracles in terms of their capacity to cause wonder, but no agreed definition or, indeed, any definition is developed and expounded.

Even Augustine, whose understanding of the relationship between nature and miracle we shall now examine, did not wholly succeed in over-

1. Chrysostom. hom. 22. 3 in Jo. PG 59.135 - 136

2. Grant p. 213 Originally thought to have been by Justin. It is not attributed to Theodoret by Lampe.

3. quaestiones. et responses. 117. ὑπὲρ φύσιν. Otto. Tom. 3. 2. 192 C

4. quaestiones et responses. 24, 31.



coming the problem. His treatment is however the most complete. While he deals with the question extensively in *The City of God*, it is necessary, in order to get the fullest picture of his understanding to the problem to refer to passages in many other works in which he deals with the matter.

Augustine deals with the problem by two radical definitions relating to the problem. The first defines miracles as 'not contrary to nature but contrary to nature as it is known'.<sup>2</sup> The second definition which can be extracted from his writings is that nature is a continuous system of causes the origin of which is either mediately or immediately to be found in the will of God.<sup>3</sup> No event could, therefore, be outside it. Everything that happened was within nature.

It will help to understand Augustine's first definition if we examine the context in which he makes the comment that 'portentum fit non contra naturam sed contra quam est nota natura'.<sup>4</sup> He is discussing the doctrine of hell and meeting the criticism that it is against the nature of the human body to be burnt without being consumed by fire. He refers to a portent mentioned by Varro and suggests that Varro called it a portent because it seemed contrary to nature. This is a mistake because nothing happens contrary to nature. We shall see later that this definition of relationship of nature to miracle causes problems when Augustine defines miracles. If they are not contrary to nature but to nature as it is known the definition becomes highly subjective, for different people know more or less of nature.

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1. Augustine's understanding of the relationship of miracles to nature develops throughout his life. What follows is a summary of his final position with references to earlier works.

2. Augustine. *de civ. dei*. 21.8.

3. Augustine. *de civ. dei*. 5.8.9., *de Genesi ad litteram* 9.16.

4. Augustine. *de civ. dei*. 21.8. 'A portent does not occur contrary to nature but contrary to what is known of nature.' This sums up the long passage in *contra Faustum* 26.3.

In order to understand Augustine's treatment of the question it is necessary to examine his understanding of nature more fully. He believed that there was a 'cursus naturae'<sup>1</sup> within which the cause of every event could be found and the origin of the 'cursus naturae' is the will of God, as we have mentioned above. His concept of nature is therefore completely comprehensive. No event can happen by chance.<sup>2</sup> Since God was, immediately or mediately, the cause of every event, he could see no point in investigating causes. Even the human will, while different from all other causes, was located within the 'cursus naturae'. Divine foreknowledge rested upon the inevitable outcome of the course of nature which originated in the will of God.<sup>3</sup>

Within the 'cursus naturae', within which every event finds its place, we can distinguish, in his writings, five different classes of cause. The classification depends upon the subjective reaction of the observer of the events. The five classes of event are :

- a) an event the cause of which is known and understood;
- b) an event the immediate cause of which is unknown but easily discoverable by the observer;<sup>4</sup>
- c) an event the immediate cause of which is generally unknown but which can eventually be discovered;<sup>5</sup>
- d) an event the immediate cause of which is undiscoverable because the seed of the event has been hidden in the creation from the beginning by God. He calls these 'semina occulta', or 'seminum semina' or 'seminales rationes',<sup>6</sup> and describes the world as pregnant with these causes.

1. eg. Augustine. de Genesi ad litteram. 6.13.

2. Augustine. de civ. dei. 5.9. cf. contra Faustum 26 'But we say, not unsuitably, that God does a thing contrary to nature which he does against what we know in nature. For we give the name of nature to the well-known course of nature. And when God does anything contrary to this we speak of mighty works or miracles (magnalia vel mirabilia). But against the highest law of nature which is far removed from the knowledge of those who are irreligious or still weak, God does nothing, inasmuch he can do nothing against himself.'

3. Augustine. de civ. dei. 5.9.

4. By implication from confessiones 10.30 and de trinitate 4.11.

5. Augustine. de trinitate 3.2.

6. Augustine. de trinitate 3.9., de Genesi ad litteram 9.17.

' For as mothers are pregnant with young, so the world is pregnant with the causes of things that are born; which are not created in it except from that highest essence where nothing either springs up or dies, either begins to be or ceases. ' 1

e) an event the immediate cause of which is the will of God and which cannot therefore be discovered by man.

' God has hidden causes for certain things within himself, which he has not put into created things and which he does not allow to become reality by virtue of the providence by which he calls nature into being. ' 2

With such an analysis of classes of events and causes there seems to be a simple step to the definition of a miracle as an event the immediate cause of which is the will of God and which cannot be discovered by man. These events are not contrary to nature because they originate in the will of God which is the origin of all nature. Augustine never, however, takes this step. He chooses to define miraculous in a way which can lead to nothing but confusion. His definition is that any event which causes wonder is a miracle.

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1. Augustine. de trinitate 3.9. At this point Augustine is using the language and the concepts of Stoicism. ' The formation and development of particular things are caused by rationales seminales ( λόγοι σπερματικοί ) which come from the cosmic mind.' art. ' Stoicism ' by Friedo Ricken. Encyclopaedia of Theology ed. Karl Rahner.

2. Augustine. de Genesi ad litteram. 9.33,

' I call a miracle something strange and difficult which exceeds the expectation of him who marvels at it. ' 1

He has allowed the secular meaning of the word to define its theological use. It means a wonder-producing event, and so any event that causes wonder is a miracle. If we examine Augustine's various discussions of miracles we can see that, although his definition causes great difficulty when it comes to the theological use of the word, he accepts the implications of his definition. He was, however, clearly aware that some further narrowing of the definition was necessary, for he goes on immediately after the definition to distinguish between the wonder-producing effects of miracles and the moral effects.

' But these are divided into two kinds; for there are certain which cause only wonder but certain others procure also great grace and good will ' 2

He takes the point even further when he refers to the miraculous nature of events which do not cause wonder because we are familiar with them. He uses the word 'miracle' meaning sometimes an event which causes wonder and sometimes an event which procures 'great grace and good will'. 3 This, of course, causes confusion. An event is a miracle because it causes wonder. 4 Events which reveal the majesty and power of God may not cause wonder but should do so. Accordingly whether they cause wonder or not they are miracles. (The various words which he uses for miracles will be discussed below.)

His use of the first definition of miracles as an event causing wonder is thoroughgoing. Conjuring tricks, freaks of nature, natural

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1. Augustine. de utilitate 16. ( 34 ). 'Miraculum voco quidquid arduum aut insolitum supra spem vel facultatem mirantis apparet.'

2. Augustine. de utilitate 16 ( 34 ). ' In duo dividuntur, quaedam enim sunt quae solum faciunt admirationem; quaedam vero magnam etiam gratiam benevolentiamque conciliant.'

3. See note 2 above.

4. Augustine. de utilitate 16 ( 34 ). See note 1 above.

causes as yet undiscovered, magic arts, the work of false messiahs and the works of God in Jesus and in his Church are all miracles. Since the only characteristic of an event that is necessary to make it a miracle is that it should cause wonder, and since those who observe the event are moved to wonder because the cause is unknown to them, these events can be called miracles. Reports of such events cause Augustine no real problems. While he may question the reports of certain events, miracles as such, at whatever level they occur, are part of the 'cursus naturae' and are perfectly credible to him. He distinguishes indirectly between the 'cursus naturae' which encompasses all events and the 'cursus usitatus naturae' which is the course of nature familiar to us. It is this latter order of nature which a miracle goes against in his all embracing definition.<sup>2</sup>

Events which go against this familiar order of nature will cease to be miracles when their cause is discovered.

' Custom has robbed the familiar order of nature of its power to cause wonder',<sup>3</sup> although many natural events are wonderful in themselves.

As we can see this approach to the matter of defining a miracle leads to an inadequate answer. It is not satisfactory to define a miracle by such a flexible and subjective standard as the observer's familiarity with nature. Augustine's comment already referred to, from 'On the Utility of Believing',<sup>4</sup> indicates the way in which Augustine overcame the unsatisfactory nature of his definition in that book. He realises that since the merely wonderful is not necessarily miraculous in the

1. Augustine. de civ. dei 10.35.

2. Augustine. de utilitate 16 ( 34 ).

3. Augustine. de trinitate 3.2. cf. de civ. dei 10.12., ep. 137.3.

4. Augustine. de utilitate 16. ( 34 ). See p. 247 note 2 above.

de utilitate credendi was written in 391 - 392. The definition in de utilitate credendi 16 ( 34 ) is modified at once. The problem of distinguishing, at least in theory, between mere wonders and works of God is solved by this modification.

sense of conveying revelation, we can see that it is verging on the nonsensical to use the same word with the same very broad definition to describe the miracles of our Lord in the Gospels and the trick of a conjuror. He himself makes this clear in his homilies on the Sermon on the Mount.

' He has warned us not to be deceived by such things  
(miracles) thinking that an invisible wisdom is present  
where we see a visible miracle ' 1

Augustine's division of miracles into those producing wonder and those which 'procure also great grace and good will' also makes the point. When we take this comment together with many other comments which indicate that many things that are not wonder-producing are miraculous,<sup>2</sup> we can see that Augustine has effectively two definitions of miracle. His second definition is wholly within the tradition which sees the essential characteristic of a miracle to be its function as a sign. He develops this point in several different places. The government of the world is more miraculous than the feeding of the multitude;<sup>3</sup> nothing in the world is more miraculous than the world itself;<sup>4</sup> and man is more miraculous than any miracle that man does.<sup>4</sup> This kind of comment is to be found frequently in the writings of Augustine. He also develops the related point of distinguishing between authentic miracles which reveal God and false miracles.<sup>5</sup> Christian miracles can be distinguished from the wonders of pagan gods because Christian miracles bear witness to the one true God and pagan wonders are done to pass off the pagan gods as divine.<sup>6</sup>

1. Augustine. *de Sermone Domini in monte* 2.25.

2. Augustine. in Jo. 24. The government of the world.

Augustine. *de civ. dei*. 10.12. Man himself a greater miracle than any miracle worked by man.

3. & 4. See note 2 above.

5. He observes that miracles are performed by both good and bad. Sermon 40.5.

Sermons on selected lessons from the New Testament trans. E. B. Pusey. Oxford. 1854.

6. Augustine. *de civ. dei*. 22.10.

' Test a miracle by its purpose: is it done for the glory  
of God or for the glorification of the does. ' /

By this means Augustine avoids falling into the trap towards which the word *miraculum* led him and produces a definition of miracle that is within the tradition of understanding that begins in the New Testament.

We have discussed briefly Augustine's belief in contemporary miracles and we have noticed the problems that contemporary miracles caused. He is constant in his warnings against tempting God by seeking signs and, as we have seen, accounted for the relative rarity of miracles in the Gospels. He also, however, being a child of his age, sent priests of his who had been accused of disorders to the shrine of S. Felix of Nola which had its reputation for detecting guilt.<sup>2</sup> No such shrine existed in Africa. He certainly has few doubts about reports of contemporary miracles.<sup>3</sup>

There are times when Augustine's argument, which sought to place every event within the '*cursus naturae*', seems forced. When he discusses the talking ass of Balaam, the event is said to be natural not because speech is natural to an ass but because the beast is subject to the potent will of God.<sup>4</sup> The will of the creator is the nature of each created thing.<sup>5</sup> Some events, such as the rod of Moses, find their cause only in the course of nature known to God.<sup>6</sup>

Augustine did not limit the concept of the miraculous by testing it against some preconceived order of nature. He did not consider the report of an event and decide by some already accepted criterion that it was against the order of nature and could not have occurred. He believed

1. Augustine. *de diversis quaestionibus* LXXXIII quaest. 79.

2. Augustine. *ep.* 78.

3. Augustine. *de civ. dei.* 22.

4. Augustine. *de Genesi ad litteram* 9.17.

5. Augustine. *de civ. dei.* 21 8. cf. *contra Faustum* 26.

6. Augustine. *de Genesi ad litteram* 6.13.

that, since a large element of the course of nature was unknown and unknowable, a wonderful event, the cause of which was unknown, would find a place in the course of nature known to God. There are hints, but only hints, that at some level Augustine knew about, and accepted partly, an understanding of nature in which there was a fixed element. He states, for example, that a boy of twelve, could not, by a well known law of nature, father a child.<sup>1</sup> There are also two passages in which Augustine seems to speak of miracles as interferences in a fixed order. Causes are reserved by God and not implanted in the creation but kept in the divine will. They are, in this sense, interferences in the divine course of nature in a way that those events, the seeds of which are implanted in nature, are not. This is however an isolated idea which only occurs in two passages in the literal commentary on Genesis.<sup>2</sup> The understanding which forms the most common understanding to be found in Augustine is that which has been described.

In an unexpected way Augustine's understanding of nature, in which each event has a cause, even if some of the causes are undiscoverable, provides an almost adequate intellectual model for subsequent and more modern speculation on the course of nature.

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1. Augustine. de civ. dei. 15. 12.

2. Augustine. de Genesi ad litteram 6. 18., 9. 17.



Miracles in Hagiography and in Popular Wonder-working Traditions

An examination of the Life of Gregory Thaumaturgus by Gregory of Nyssa, the Life of Apollonius of Tyana by Philostratus and the History of the Egyptian Monks with the additions of Rufinus.

The Church's understanding of the miraculous was developed when there was, as we have seen, a widespread belief in magic and magicians and wonder-working. Although a fairly sophisticated level of theological debate may have existed in the circles of theological writers it is unlikely that the understanding of the miraculous that we have discussed here generally represents the popular belief about miracles. Even writers of great profundity were fascinated by and clearly believed in the reports of spectacular miracles. Book 22. chap. 8 of the City of God shows how credulous, by modern standards, Augustine was. Then, as now, it was the spectacular which attracted attention. Beginning slowly in our period but then growing rapidly in both East and West we find a genre of hagiography that consisted of accounts of the most spectacular miracles. We find Augustine and Gregory of Nyssa and many other Fathers writing such accounts. These accounts are matched in the pagan world by such works as the Life of Apollonius of Tyana by Philostratus which is examined below. It may be that there was some measure of cross influence between the Christian and pagan writers. Certainly the Fathers accepted that pagan wonder-workers worked real wonders<sup>1</sup> as they believed that the pagan gods had worked wonders.<sup>2</sup> We have seen the various explanations of their powers in several Fathers. It is beyond the scope of this study to trace the extent of this cross influence. In the case of the one pagan life studied it is quite clear that there are substantial differences between the Gospels and the Life of Apollonius and we can find very few parallels between the Life of Apollonius and the History of the Egyptian Monks.

1. Augustine. de civ.Dei.8.16. 2. e.g. Minucius Felix.Oct.27. Tertullian.apol.22.

Lactantius.div.inst.2.8. Augustine.de civ.Dei.10.16

In the Christian narratives we can find certain common features.

- a). Firstly we find that the hyperbole to be found in the Synoptic tradition sometimes becomes a miracle in the accounts of the hagriographers; sayings from the Gospels are turned into accounts of miracles, e.g. the saying of Jesus about the power of faith to move mountains<sup>1</sup> seems to be changed into a nature miracle in which a mountain is moved. Nyssa's Life of Gregory Thaumaturgus is a good example of this kind of writing. There are also examples in the History of the Egyptian Monks.
- b). We find the attribution of great miracles as a sign either of the orthodoxy of the miracle worker or of his holiness of life.
- c). We also find what might be called the phenomenon of transparency, that is we see the limits of nature transcended by a saint who in his holiness has become transparent to the power of God and is able to perform great miracles.
- d). We find also the opposite case where the power to perform miracles is understood to be almost a personal possession. At this point the Christian narratives most closely resemble some aspects of the pagan narratives. Some of the accounts speak of the power being used almost capriciously and the accounts seem to lack any edifying content. The miracle in such cases is not so much a demonstration of divine power as a demonstration of personal skill.

Gregory Thaumaturgus. PG .46.893-958. Dictionary of Christian Biography Vol. 2. Smith and Wace. 1880 - 1881. Art. Gregory Thaumaturgus.

We are not concerned here with questions of historicity in Nyssa's Life of Gregory Thaumaturgus. It is, perhaps, worth noting however that Gregory in his panegyric on Origen his master includes

1. Mt 17.20 cf. 1 Cor. 13.2. See p. 261 n. 2. below.

2. See p. 261 n. 2. below.

a full account of his own early life and at no point mentions the working of miracles. There are indeed many differences between Nyssa's account and Gregory's panegyric on Origen. Eusebius mentions Gregory three times without the surname Thaumaturgus.<sup>1</sup>

Basil of Caesarea,<sup>2</sup> quoting Nyssa's life, or his source if there is an independent source, speaks of Gregory as a wonder worker and there are brief references to him as a wonder worker in Jerome,<sup>3</sup> Socrates,<sup>4</sup> Sozomen<sup>5</sup> and Rufinus.<sup>6</sup> We may reasonably assume that Gregory of Nyssa is the source of the stories about Thaumaturgus. There seems to be no earlier source.<sup>7</sup> These stories were the origin of the name Thaumaturgus and were accepted in the contemporary church as authentic. This wide acceptance gives a good indication of popular belief and understanding concerning miracles in this period.

The accounts of his miracles occur in the course of a narrative of his life in which great stress is laid upon his holiness of life and his orthodoxy. The surname Thaumaturgus is not, in the language of the period, a title which would automatically commend its bearer. A thaumaturge is more likely to be a pagan wonder worker than a pillar of orthodoxy although the word *Θαυματουργος*<sup>8</sup> is used to describe Jesus. The range, though not the number, of miracles attributed to him is greater than the range of miracles attributed to Jesus in the Gospels. The Gospel accounts are modest compared to those in the Life. The nearest comparable biblical account of some of the miracles is perhaps the miracle of stopping the sun in its course in Joshua. (Josh. 10.) - The most dramatic miracles of the Gospels hardly match those of Thaumaturgus.

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1.h.e.6.30.2.,7.14.1.,7.28.1.

2.de Spiritu sancto.39.74.,epp.28.1 & 2.,204.2.,207.4.,210.3 & 5.

3.de vir.illus.65.,comm.in Eccles.4.,ep.70.4.

4.h.e.4.27.

5.h.e.7.27.

6.h.e.7.25. cf.also Evagrius.h.e.3.31.

7.The incidents at PG 46.904 & 940C occur in other hagiographies see e.g. Sozomen.h.e.8.27.

8.Gregory Nazianzus.carm.1.2.24.,Chrysostom.hom.67.1.in Mt.

Nature miracles are the most spectacular of the miracles attributed to him. Two of them are clearly an application to Thaumaturgus of the saying at Matt. 17.20 concerning the faith that can move mountains. In one case, in a debate with a priest of Apollo about the Christian faith, Gregory asserts that the mysteries of the Gospel cannot be explained but can only be demonstrated by miracles and in order to persuade the priest of the truth of the Gospel Thaumaturgus moves a rock the size of a mountain.<sup>1</sup> This is a remarkable example of a miracle being used to induce faith. We have seen the opposite understanding of the relationship between miracles and faith i.e. that faith is necessary for the perception of a miracle.<sup>2</sup> (While there are one or two examples of Fathers suggesting that miracles have an important place in the process of conversion the general view is that holiness of life is a more powerful agent of conversion. Wonders can be worked by false Christs and magicians.) Gregory is also recorded as moving a mountain in order to provide space for the building of a church.

There are two other nature miracles recorded of Gregory. In the first he demonstrates his wisdom as a judge by raising the bed of a lake in order to settle a legal action between two brothers. In the second he prevents the river Lycus overflowing its banks and in doing so avoids a flood.<sup>3</sup> (cf. The miracle of S. Fridian recorded in the Dialogues of S. Gregory. Book iii.c.9.)

Gregory is a powerful exorcist and is also recorded as having killed by a curse. In one case of exorcism he casts the devil out of

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1. PG 46.917B

2. p. 219 above.

3. PG 46.952B

a temple of Apollo where he and his followers wish to spend the night. More surprising and less edifying is the account of him allowing the devil to return in the morning. He gives the devil written permission to reside in the temple.<sup>1</sup> Except as a demonstration of power over the devil it is hard to see any edifying purpose in this account. He is also credited with an exorcism early in his life, perhaps after his ordination as a priest but before his consecration as a bishop. The narrative does not give the details. He is publicly accused of fathering a child by the mother.<sup>2</sup> On making the accusation the mother is possessed by a demon. When the demon is exorcised by Gregory she confesses that the accusation is false. The cursing is remarkable for the rarity of such events in the accounts of the lives of the Fathers. Nyssa records that two Jews tried to fool Gregory by one of them pretending to be dead.<sup>3</sup> Gregory is asked to restore his life. He lays his vestment on the man who is found to be really dead when Gregory leaves him. This is the reverse of the more common case of the clothes or personal possessions of saints effecting cures.

More significant than these miracles are those which testify to the holiness and orthodoxy of Gregory. The symbol of faith preserved in the Church of Neo-Caesarea, which is referred to by many of the Fathers, was said to have been dictated to him by the Blessed Virgin Mary and S. John the Divine.<sup>4</sup> Such a report was the most conclusive answer imaginable to any questions about the orthodoxy of Gregory. A statement of faith from such a source was beyond reproach. His

1.PG 46.915D

2.PG 46.904A

3.PG 46.940C

4.PG 46.912C & D

humility is reported in a story about his reluctance to receive consecration as a bishop.<sup>1</sup> When Fedimus of Amasia wished to consecrate Gregory he could not be found but Fedimus nevertheless prayed aloud the prayer of consecration which was heard by Gregory in his hiding place, a substantial distance away. He then returned and accepted his elevation to the episcopate.

Nyssa's Life, with its spectacular miracles, is one of the first in what was to become a very popular genre. While it would have achieved the effect of certifying Gregory's orthodoxy, power and holiness to those who accepted it as true it is not easy to discover any other value in the Life. It is hard to see how such stories did more than cause the simple to be amazed but such a conclusion is, perhaps, anachronistic. It is not difficult to suggest a motive which may have led him to enlarge on miracles in this way. As Origen became more theologically suspect Gregory of Nyssa needed to protect himself from suspicion of a part in Origen's heresy by shewing the orthodoxy of a Father who had been Origen's disciple.

He omits from the Life any reference to the importance of Origen's influence on Gregory. While securing Thaumaturgus from criticism Nyssa contrives also to secure himself from criticism.<sup>2</sup>

We can see in the Life those characteristics of popular hagiography mentioned above. The movement of mountains is a particularly clear example of the use of the words of the Gospel as a basis for reports of miracles. The whole Life was probably written to boost the orthodoxy of Gregory Thaumaturgus. While this Life is the most substantial life of this sort in our period there are many similar accounts of great saints working wonders written later.

<sup>1</sup> PG 46.909

<sup>2</sup> S. Macrina the Elder, Gregory of Nyssa's grandmother had been a pupil of Gregory Thaumaturgus. ODCC art. 'Gregory Thaumaturgus. Twigg p.167, suggests that the Panegyric addressed to Origen is not by Thaumaturgus and that Thaumaturgus may not have known Origen.

Apollonius of Tyana. (Loeb Classical Library. Life of Apollonius by Philostratus)

Apollonius of Tyana was one of the most renowned wonder-workers in the ancient world of whom there were many. The principal source is the Life of Apollonius of Tyana by Philostratus. This work seems to have been based on the memoirs of a close follower of Apollonius called Damis of Nineveh. The Life was written in about 217 some 150 years after the death of Apollonius in the reign of Nerva. Apollonius is referred to by Lactantius<sup>1</sup> and Augustine<sup>2</sup> critically as a pagan magician. The attack is not extensive or sustained so it is unlikely that Apollonius' reputation as wonder worker represented a threat to Christian belief. Oesterreich,<sup>3</sup> in a foot-note, observes that Apollonius was a disciple of Jesus but he does not quote any authority and I have been unable to find any other reference to this. No mention of it is made in the Life.

The Life was composed by Philostratus at the request of the wife of Septimus Severus who had come into possession of the memoirs of Damis. Two other memoirs of Apollonius by Maximus of Aegae and by Moeregenes were known. In addition to the memoirs of Damis, Philostratus used some letters of Apollonius collected by the Emperor Hadrian and he also visited the places connected with Apollonius and recorded the traditions that had survived. The Life seems to have been conscientiously researched and seems to show as much historical scepticism and objectivity as could be expected in a Third Century

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1.div.inst.5.2.23.

2.ep.136.

3.Oesterreich.Possession p.7.n1.

author. He believes in magic and is superstitious and since he is writing for an educated readership one may reasonably suppose that belief in magic and a large measure of superstition were present among the educated classes in the Third Century and in the preceding centuries. The Life may be understood as an apologia for Apollonius with the object of rebuilding his reputation as a great philosopher restoring morality to Greek life rather than a wonder worker or magician, charges which had been made against Apollonius. He is, however, carried away by the more spectacular elements in the traditions concerning Apollonius and cannot be said to have succeeded wholly in his purpose.

Origen,<sup>1</sup> Augustine,<sup>2</sup> Lactantius<sup>3</sup> and even Philostratus<sup>4</sup> describe Apollonius as a sorcerer and magician. Eusebius in *Contra Apollonium*. c.31,35. attributes the wonders of Apollonius to sorcery and the work of demons. Lucian in *Ἀλεξάνδρου ἡ ψευδομαντίας* c.5.

(Fowler's translation) refers to Alexander as one of 'the great charlatans associated with Apollonius, a charlatan like Alexander.'

Philostratus defends Apollonius against the charge of being a *γόης* or a *γοήτης*, a wizard or a sorcerer. He also defends him against the charge of being a *μάγος* although the word does not so much mean a wizard as a wise man. Apollonius himself regarded the magi of Babylon and Susa as good and wise men.<sup>5</sup> Philostratus is highly critical<sup>6</sup> of the wizards. Apollonius is however accused by others of being a wizard,<sup>7</sup> and he has to defend himself against such a charge in a trial<sup>8</sup> before Domitian.

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1. Cels.6.41.

2.ep.138.4.

3.div.inst.5. 2 & 3.

4.Life 1.3.

5. Life 1.40.

6. " 5.12.

7. " 4.18.,8.19.,8.30.

8. " 8.7.



2

It has been suggested by ancient and modern authors that there is significant similarity between the Life and the Gospels and that the Life is something of a counter-blast to the Gospels. No substantial similarity to the Gospels can be found in the Life and there is no evidence in the Life that this is its purpose.

If we are to find any parallel in Christian literature to the Life it is to be found perhaps in the History of the Egyptian Monks rather than the Gospels and then only at certain points which will be examined below. The most obvious difference between the Gospels and the Life are a) the eschatology, b) the moral rather than the spectacular nature of the miracles of the Gospels, c) the establishment of a community within which the life of the founder of a religion is preserved and d) the difference in literary form between the Gospels and the Life. We shall examine these differences briefly before examining the slight parallels which exist between some parts of the Life and the History of the Egyptian Monks.

The Gospels and their understanding of Jesus as the Messiah are incomprehensible outside the context of 1st. century Jewish eschatology. Jesus is not a teacher but an eschatological preacher preparing his hearers for the coming day of judgement, and his miracles are part of this preaching, acts of victory over the dark forces of this age. No such eschatology is presumed in the Life. Apollonius is a moral teacher and philosopher who possesses gifts of healing and other gifts, but these healings do not have eschatological significance. Exorcisms, perhaps the most characteristic acts in which the power of the Messiah defeats the dark forces of this world, do not occur in the Life in the way in which they occur in the Gospels and in the records of the early

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1. Hierocles ap. Eusebius contra Hieroclem

2. e.g. Morton Smith Jesus the Magician p.86 et al. Pelikan quoting Holl (Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte vol.2 pp 249 -269) and Quasten (Patrology vol.3.p.43) makes the point that the Life serves as a model for Athanasius' Life of S. Anthony, which is itself a model for for much subsequent hagiography. Pelikan Jesus p.31 f.

Church. The few accounts of occasions upon which he deals with spirits have no relationship to the tradition of exorcism. He chases off a ghostly apparition by abusing it,<sup>1</sup> and disposes of a satyr by getting it drunk.<sup>2</sup> The nearest event to a traditional exorcism is his reformation of a licentious youth by casting a demon from him.<sup>3</sup> The different understanding of the work of Jesus and Apollonius caused by the absence from the Life of the overwhelming eschatological concern to be found in the Gospels is the most obvious and significant difference between the Life and the Gospels.

The cures of Apollonius, in the absence of the eschatological reference, are of different significance. The wonders he performs stem from his possession of esoteric knowledge. He is interested in the occult properties of gem stones and, as referred to above, Philostratus mentions the accusations of sorcery made against Apollonius. Although he was ready to interpret a thunder storm as a sign of divine anger,<sup>4</sup> there is nowhere in the Life any indication that Apollonius or Philostratus understood the healing powers to be any part of a divine mission or the expression of divine power at work in his life. The power is personal and although some asceticism seems to be necessary for the exercise of the powers there is no indication that they are of divine origin.<sup>5</sup>

Apollonius established no church or community set over against the world which would embody his teaching and life. His teaching was remembered and passed on but remained teaching and nothing more. He was a travelling wise man who learned and taught and worked wonders as he travelled. His work and its effect are wholly different from

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1. Life 2.4.

2. " 6.27.

3. " 4.20.

4. " 6.38.

5. " 8.7.

that of Jesus who was believed by his followers to be the Messiah bringing in God's New Age.

Finally we have the difference in literary form between the Life and the Gospels. The Life, though uncertain in parts about its geography, sets out to be and succeeds fairly well in being a formal biography. The Life sets out the details of the life of Apollonius chronologically and in some detail and is set within the context of world history when relevant. The Gospels make no pretence of being biographies even if we include the infancy narratives of Matthew and Luke. There is little detail about the life of Jesus before he enters the Gospel narratives and there is no serious attempt to set out material chronologically within those narratives. While Luke makes passing and inconsistent references to Roman authorities there is also no systematic attempt to set the ministry of Jesus within world history; rather it is set within the salvation history of Israel.

Apollonius' concern with the occult and with the magic traditions of Persia and the Brahmins of India for example, find no parallels in the Gospels. There are some slight parallels between the History of the Egyptian Monks and the Life. Apollonius had, apparently, the gift of foreknowledge<sup>3</sup> and to some degree this gift seemed to depend upon an abstemious diet. He is recorded as vanishing from the courtroom of Domitian,<sup>4</sup> moving quickly from place to place and escaping from bonds when imprisoned in Crete in later life.<sup>5</sup> There are incidents similar to this in the History of the Egyptian Monks but the parallels are few and unconvincing. There is no reason to suppose that the Life draws

1. Life 1.31 & 32

2. " 1.2. & 6.10.

3. " 4.44. & 8.7.

4. " 8.8. & 7.38.

5. " 8.8.

anything from the New Testament (or that there is any significant relationship between the Life and the History of the Egyptian Monks or similar writings).

The Life adds little to our knowledge of the understanding of the miraculous at the beginning of the Third Century. Contemporary and later Christian hagiography contains reports of events which are in every way more remarkable than those reported of Apollonius. Not until after our period do we find any serious involvement of Christians in occult practices. (Note the very effective treatment of conjurors and magicians in Hippolytus. This critical and dismissive treatment is the most extensive to be found in the period.)<sup>1</sup>

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1. See p.198 above

The History of the Egyptian Monks, translation by Norman Russell.

This history, written in Greek in about 400 and translated into Latin and expanded by Rufinus between 405 and 410,<sup>1</sup> gives an account of the visit of a group of seven monks or clerics, probably from Jerusalem, to the monks of Egypt c 394-5.<sup>2</sup> The monks of Egypt lived in an area around the Nile from Alexandria and Dioclos in the north to Lycopolis in the south as well as in the Skete to the west of the Nile delta. The additions made by Rufinus may have been taken from his own experiences on a visit to the monks in 375.<sup>3</sup> The monks were renowned for their holiness of life, their asceticism and their spiritual teaching. They were visited by many people including Jerome<sup>4</sup> and Cassian.<sup>5</sup> Both have left accounts of their visits. So frequent were the visitors that the monks had to find ways of deterring the less serious.<sup>6</sup> The History is the only full account of such a visit that survives and it deals extensively with all aspects of the life of the monks of Egypt and with the miracles of the monks. It gives us a full picture of the understanding of the miraculous among educated Christians, most of whom were religious or secular clerics, at the end of the Fourth Century.

While we can read about miracles as remarkable as any in the Christian literature of the period, exceeded perhaps only by Nyssa's life of Gregory Thaumaturgus, it is worth observing that the language used to describe miracles is that of the New Testament rather than that of the Greek and Latin Fathers. The words<sup>7</sup> used are *δύναμις* / *virtus*, *σημεῖον* / *signum*, and occasionally *θαύμα* / *prodigium* and

1. Russell p.7.

2. " p.5.

3. " p.7.

4. Jerome.ep.84.3.,108.14.

5. Cassian.coll.3.

6. Russell p.4.

7. Russell p.39.

Θαυματουργία. The miracles reveal the power of God working as effectively in the ministry of the monks as in the ministries of the apostles and prophets. The miracles are not the exercise of personal power but the exercise of divine power.<sup>1</sup> Copres, while describing some of the more spectacular miracles of Patermuthius and his own miracles, speaks of the "miracles that God worked through me".<sup>2</sup> Apollo speaks of the power to work miracles as handed on by the apostles and prophets.<sup>3</sup> Any boasting about the power to work miracles or any lack of mercy may lead to a loss of the charismatic gifts.<sup>4</sup> The Fathers warned that such a power could lead to boasting. John of Lycopolis tells the story of the monk who becomes over confident and begins to lose his zeal. As a result the miraculous gift of bread ceases.<sup>5</sup> (A partial parallel to this occurs in the Life of Apollonius when the wonder-worker fears that he will lose his powers through eating too much.)<sup>6</sup> It is significant however that it was not a lapse in asceticism that threatened the power of the monks but lapses into pride, self-confidence and the lack of mercy;<sup>7</sup> referring to this Abba Helle speaks of "true asceticism".<sup>8</sup> The power of the monks was not a power to be acquired by asceticism alone but a gift to those who had achieved a life of holiness, a process which clearly involved some measure of asceticism. Their state was a state of spiritual transparency to the power of God. They lived the life of the New Age in this age. They lived and exercised divine power in a renewed creation in which food was not lacking and in which they were able to communicate with beasts.

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1. Russell p.39.

2. hist.mon.8.2 & 15.

3. " 10.30.

4. " 8.47.

5. " 6.2., 8.14 & 15.

6. " 1.47 - 53.

7. Life 8.1.

8. hist.mon.10.2.

9. " 12.1.

The literary form of the miracles is clearly affected by the characteristic of the enacted parable or enacted preaching which is encountered in the literary form of some miracle stories in the Old and New Testament. Bread is provided in the desert, the sun is stopped in its course and the monks walk across water.<sup>1</sup>

The miracles of the desert can be put into five classes;

- a) miracles of clairvoyance of various sorts,
- b) miracles of healing,
- c) raisings,
- d) dreams and
- e) nature miracles.

The monks of the desert are reported as being able to see into the future. John of Lycopolis advises an emperor and a general<sup>2</sup> about a military campaign and foretells the rise and fall of the Nile. Apollo could foretell the arrival of visitors.<sup>3</sup> Paul foretells the death of Anouph.<sup>4</sup> They can also see events happening at a distance<sup>5</sup> and detect a cleric among a group of monks when he has not revealed that he is a cleric.<sup>6</sup> Sr Benedicta Ward observes in her introduction to Russell's translation that clairvoyance is a "result and reward for the life of asceticism."<sup>7</sup> As we have observed above the writer sees the exercise of mercy and humility, themselves the fruit of an ascetic life, as the qualities upon which the exercise of divine gifts depends. It is these qualities rather than the practice of asceticism as such that is the prerequisite for the exercise of charismatic gifts. Sr Benedicta may have misunderstood the writer at this point or, more

1. hist.mon.10.12.

2. " 10.1 & 2.

3. " 8.48.

4. " 12.11.

5. " 10.6 & 8., 10.12.

6. " 1.14.

7. Russell p.40.

probably, uses the word 'asceticism' to describe the fruits of an ascetic life. This is a minor point. It is plain however that the author does not understand the place of asceticism in the working of miracles in the way it is understood by Philostratus for example. Asceticism can fail unless it leads to humility and the monks discipline themselves not to work miracles but to become humble, "Let us discipline ourselves to become humble".<sup>1</sup>

The monks were famous for their healing power and even, in one case, some degree of specialisation.<sup>2</sup> Despite the reports of their reputation in general terms there is some circumspection in the attitude of the monks to healing and there are relatively few accounts of specific healings. John of Lycopolis, for example, heals by sending blessed oil to the sick.<sup>3</sup> He does so to avoid personal publicity. He delays healing a fever in one of the visitors since he believes that it is caused by lack of faith.<sup>4</sup> The details of the illness and the cure sound however more like a case of food poisoning than of possession. The relationship between sin and illness is made again in the case of a boy suffering from rabies.<sup>5</sup> The boy is healed when Ammon tells the parents to restore an ox that they have stolen.<sup>6</sup> Rufinus adds to the original version of the History the healing of a girl by Macarios and the healing of a cripple after contact with a harness made by John the Hermit.<sup>7</sup> This last healing is made more spectacular in the Syriac version. The other references to the healings are general with a comment in one case that the Father mentioned, John of Dioclos, specialised in rheumatism and gout and Rufinus<sup>8</sup>

1. hist.mon.1.44.

2. see below

3. hist.mon.1.12.

4. " 1.16.

5. cf. Mk 2.1 - 12.

6. hist.mon.22.3 & 4.

7. Russell p.151.

8. hist.mon.13.9.

9. " 24.



adds that he was good at curing depressions as well.<sup>1</sup>

There are general references to exorcisms by Abba Or,<sup>2</sup> Copres,<sup>3</sup> Pityrion<sup>4</sup> and Paul<sup>5</sup> who was able to cast out devils that had resisted the great Antony. Abba Helle kept devils at bay by drawing a line which they were unable to pass.<sup>6</sup> It is surprising that there are no detailed accounts of exorcisms which occur so frequently in the Synoptic Tradition and in the Fathers of both East and West. There is understood to be a relationship between sin and illness which, as we have seen, has its roots in the Synoptic Tradition, but at this stage there does not seem to be any relationship between illness and possession. Possession manifests itself in the usual ways. The use of blessed oil as a sacramental agent of healing seems, however, to bring illness and possession much closer to each other in that there are similarities in healing methods.<sup>7.</sup>

Perhaps even more surprising than the absence of specific exorcisms is the very small number of raisings from the dead that are mentioned. The original version only contains one general reference to raisings in which the writer says that the desert Fathers ".... raised the dead and walked on water like Peter."<sup>8</sup> The original version has one specific raising, by Patermuthius.<sup>9</sup> The detail of the story is rather bizarre. Having promised a young monk that he would bury him properly when he died, Patermuthius recalls him to life after the funeral in order to see if he is satisfied with the funeral rites. Rufinus' version of the life of Macarius the Egyptian contains two raisings almost as strange. On one occasion Macarius raises a murd-

1. Russell p.155.

2. hist.mon.2.6.

3. " 10.1.

4. " 16.

5. " 24.10.

6. " 12.13.

7. Oesterreich p.

8. hist.mon.Epilogue 2.

9. " 10.11.

ered man from death in order to prove the innocence of a man falsely accused of the murder and on another occasion he raises a man in order to confound a heretic.<sup>1</sup> It is hard to see the moral or revelatory significance of these raisings. They have more in common with the performances of wonder workers than other raisings within the Christian tradition. It is noteworthy that in the New Testament and in the Fathers generally there are fairly few raisings from the dead. Of all the miracles of healing and restoration these must have been the least credible and the least likely to have had many witnesses.

The History gives several accounts of revelations by visions and dreams, but both of these mediums of revelation are treated with the greatest caution. The danger of delusion by the devil was constantly present in the minds of the desert Fathers. The devil sometimes comes to a monk to trap him into pride or impurity although only the account given by John of Lycopolis reports a monk succumbing to the temptation.<sup>2</sup> The Fathers of the desert were sceptical about some experiences which might have been imaginative dreams. When Macarius the Elder reports that he has been to the paradise of Jambres and Jannes the Fathers to whom he reports the experience refuse to return with him and persuade him not to go back himself.<sup>3</sup> The obvious implication is that they thought that he had imagined the visit. There are also, however, dreams which were believed to be divine revelations. Anouph and Paternuthius see visions of the blessed in heaven and Apollo sees a vision of Jesus in judgement.<sup>4</sup> Paternuthius, before his conversion, while burgling an anchoress' hermitage falls asleep and dreams

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1. Russell p.151 f.

2. hist.mon.2.9 & 10., 8.46 - 47., 1.32 - 35. n.b. the weakness of the effect of asceticism by itself without reform of life.

3. hist.mon.21.5.

4. " 11.7., 10.20.

of "someone like an emperor" who urges him to reform his life. Stranger than the dream perhaps is that he was planning to burgle such unpromising premises as a hermitage and that while thinking about how he was to break in he fell asleep and was woken up by the anchoress. The anchoress converted him in the morning.<sup>1</sup>

For those Fathers who had, by the holiness of their lives, broken through the limitations of this life to the life to come the limitations of nature present no problems. Patermuthius stops the sun in its course so that he can walk to a village in the daylight;<sup>2</sup> and also walks on water. As mentioned above, the writer in the Prologue mentions that the monks walk across the Nile with dry feet and in the Epilogue refers to the monks who walk across the water like Peter.<sup>3</sup> Miraculous travel is also reported. Patermuthius could travel through the air and had only to wish to be in a place and he was there.<sup>4</sup> The most dramatic journey was his visit to paradise, from where he brought back a fig which did not rot and the smell of which healed sick men for a long time afterwards. The prayer of Abba Souros conveys him and his companions upstream in a boat without fatigue.<sup>5</sup>

It is not surprising that there are many reports of miraculous food in the desert. Apollo is fed in the desert during a persecution and also receives the food of paradise when without food.<sup>6</sup> Patermuthius,<sup>7</sup> Abba Souros<sup>8</sup> and Abba Helle<sup>9</sup> all receive bread in the desert. In some cases the stories are plainly parallels of the story of Elisha feeding his followers in the desert.<sup>10</sup> Apollo,<sup>11</sup> when he returns from feeding the victims of a famine, is asked by the devil, in a temptation, if he

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|----------------------------------|-------|------------------------------------|
| 1. hist. mon. 10.4.              | 7. "  | 8.38 - 41.                         |
| 2. " 10.12. cf. Joshua 10.12 ff. | 8. "  | 10.8.                              |
| 3. " Prologue 9., Epilogue 2.    | 9. "  | 11.5.                              |
| 4. " 10.20.                      | 10. " | 12.14 - 15., 2.9. cf 2 Kings 4.42. |
| 5. " 11.2.                       | 11. " | 12.4.                              |
| 6. " 8.5 - 6.                    |       |                                    |

is Elijah. The food is given by God in response to humility and trust,<sup>1</sup> and when a brother becomes proud the quality of the bread deteriorates.<sup>2</sup>

The holiness of the monks who have broken through the limitations of this life enables them to communicate with animals. Abba Bes controls a ravaging hippopotamus,<sup>3</sup> Theon feeds wild animals,<sup>4</sup> Amoun uses serpents to guard his door against robbers<sup>5</sup> and Macarius heals the blind cubs of a hyena.<sup>6</sup> The relationship with the animals is not always benign and Abba Helle kills a crocodile who has ferried him across the Nile so that the crocodile can, by his death, make reparation for his victims.<sup>7</sup> In fulfillment of the prophecy in Luke 10.19.f the monks can kill serpents with impunity.<sup>8</sup>

As we have seen, the History in its treatment of miracles does not exclude elements which, even by the standard of the desert, are rather bizarre and reminiscent of the work of thaumaturgists. Of these the raisings are perhaps the strangest although the specialisation in certain sorts of illness by John of Lycopolis in the addition by Rufinus is also strange. One story which has not been examined and which is odd in many respects is the account of a sort of competition between Souros, Isaiah and Paul to demonstrate which of them has advanced most in the spiritual life.<sup>9</sup> The account would fit in more easily into the stories of competing thaumaturgists or into a mediaeval fairy tale.

It is, perhaps, inevitable that such elements should have found their way into the History but they do not sit easily with the lives of these holy ascetics and they are irrelevant to the purpose of the

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1. hist.mon.8.4 - 7.

2. " 1.47 - 53.

3. " 4.3.

4. " 6.4.

5. " 9.6 - 7.

History, which is to bring to a wide audience the story of the lives of these monks whose reputation for holiness was so great.

## Conclusion

Any study of the understanding of the miraculous which covers a period of more than two thousand years from the earliest writings of the Old Testament to the time of Augustine will inevitably encounter many differences in understanding. The effect of rival theological and intellectual systems, of changing cosmologies, of the demands of apologetic and contemporary religious experience with many less significant factors produce different understandings of the miraculous. The writer of Genesis 24, the Apologists and Augustine lived in different worlds and understood the activity of God in these worlds differently. In view of this the presence of certain common characteristics throughout the whole period in the understanding of the miraculous is, in some ways, more remarkable than the differences.

Firstly we find that at no stage in Israel or the Church in this period is there any doubt that God acts to reveal himself in certain events nor was there any doubt that God was free to act as he wished and that he was subject to no external constraints. Even when an early theory of nature developed it was not believed to be a limitation on the freedom of God and in the last writer studied, Augustine, the order of nature itself is the will of God and so the miraculous is not contrary to any natural order but only to the accustomed order of things. Even writers who speak of miracles as being 'over nature' or 'against nature' mean by 'nature' the ordinary course of events and not an autonomous order independent of God.

A second characteristic is less obvious. This is the understanding of the miraculous as necessarily revelatory. We have seen that we cannot answer, in respect of any particular event, the question

'Is an event seen to be revelatory because it is wonderful or wonderful because it is revelatory?' We have called the former understanding essentialist and the latter functionalist, an understanding most clearly expressed in Jacob's comment on the crossing of the Red Sea.<sup>1</sup> The inability to answer the question in respect of any particular event does not, however, mean that we cannot answer the question in general terms. There is little doubt that in popular hagiography where miraculous events are described in most spectacular terms the essentialist understanding of the miraculous was held and that this was a popular view. The wonderful event, the cause of which was unknown, was an act of God, a miracle. Gregory of Nyssa's life of Gregory Thaumaturgus was probably written, among other reasons, because the reports of spectacular miracles were readily believed.

Two pieces of evidence indicate, however, that the functionalist understanding of the miraculous is the more fundamental understanding throughout the period. The first is the constant awareness that some wonderful events are caused by conjuring or sorcery and the consequent development of criteria by which these events are distinguished from other wonderful events the cause of which is to be found in an act of God.<sup>2</sup>

The second piece of evidence is the occurrence of events which are not wonderful to an observer without faith but which are perceived to be revelatory by faith. An event is not a miracle, therefore, unless it is revelatory and need not be wonderful to an observer without faith to be revelatory.

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1. Jacob Old Testament p224.2.p 199above

The fundamental understanding of the miraculous is that an event is a miracle if it is a revelatory event and that wonderful events are not miracles merely because they are wonderful. This understanding is occasionally submerged but never wholly disappears. Almost all the writers of the patristic period knew that wonders could be delusive and that it was necessary to distinguish between true and false miracles as almost all writers showed an amazing credulity about contemporary reports of miracles. Origen's belief in name magic<sup>1</sup> and Augustine's ready acceptance of reports of extraordinary events<sup>2</sup> shows that the two most profound thinkers of the East and West were, by 20th. Century standards, credulous. It is hard to see how either of them, and by implication most others, could avoid a charge of inconsistency between their acceptance of reports of spectacular events and belief in magic with a theology which was careful to distinguish between true and false miracles and which understood true miracles to be part of the preaching of the Gospel and of God's revelation of himself rather than isolated wonderful events or magic worked by the use of certain words.

We also see as part, perhaps, of the growing gap between popular belief and theology a growth in belief in relics. There are a few examples of belief in relics in the Old and New Testament but they are not a significant element in the understanding of the miraculous in the Biblical literature or in the Apostolic Fathers and the Apologists. Towards the end of our period belief in the power of relics grows and becomes more popular. The theoretical basis of the efficacy of relics which is based on an understanding of the power of God being retained in an object like a static electric charge is not assimilated into the theology of the miraculous. This is another example of the way in which the integrity of the understanding of the miraculous which

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1. contra Celsum 1.24 & 25. p 201 above

2. de civitate dei 22.8.



existed, for the most part, in the New Testament and in the early Patristic writers begins to break down in the late 3rd. Century heralding the emergence of the spectacular accounts of miracles in the centuries following the period under examination. The belief in the efficacy of relics is one of the more obvious parallels between pagan and Christian practice and although the cult of relics was very popular it also had powerful critics in some theologians.

The miraculous was understood to be a part of the revelatory activity of God; one aspect, though a constantly present aspect, of the doctrine of revelation. In times of anxiety and insecurity, at times when the evangelism of the Church needed something to attract an audience or it was necessary to strengthen the reputation of a theologian we read reports of great miracles. Even in normal times such reports were used to enhance the reputation of certain groups such as the Egyptian monks. But we can see also evidence in the work of Chrysostom and Augustine that miracles became remote from the experience of ordinary people in the late 4th. Century and early 5th. Century. The Apostolic Fathers could speak of 'the fullness of the spirit poured out among us'. At the end of the period we see both spectacular reports of miracles and sermons explaining why miracles are not occurring. It seems that as the perception of the miraculous ebbed and flowed in the Old Testament so it flows in the New Testament and the Church immediately after the New Testament but began to ebb towards the end of this period, the ebb being accompanied by a thirst for spectacular miracles and reports to satisfy that thirst.

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1. Tatian p 194 above.

While the miraculous continued for some time to be part of the world view of most religious people the first half of the 5th. Century marks the point in Augustine when the miraculous was most completely integrated into the whole corpus of Christian doctrine and also the point after which the miraculous became increasingly the subject of spectacular legend which could not easily be located within a doctrine of divine revelation.

## Appendix A

The words used in the Greek Fathers to refer to the miraculous.

This examination will give an indication of the significance of the words used to describe the miraculous in the Greek Fathers. In some cases references to uses outside the period will be made where there are very few references within the period. In the absence of a concordance of the majority of the Fathers being studied it has been impossible to make as thorough a study of them as was made of the words used to describe the miraculous in the New Testament. With reference, for the most part, to the Patristic Greek Lexicon edited by Lampe and the relevant indices of Migne and other collections the Greek words will be examined in the following ways :-

- a) the basic meaning of the word will be given;
- b) a note of the principal words deriving from it will be made;
- c) a note of its principal uses in the Fathers will be made;
- d) a note of any reference to the word in the main body of the study will be made.

The following words and those deriving from them will be studied.

δύναμις  
σημεῖον  
τέρας  
ἔργον  
θαύμα  
παράδοξος  
μεγαλουργία  
χάρις

For the use of these words in the New Testament see above.

Of these only δύναμις, σημεῖον and ἔργον are used frequently to refer to miracles in the New Testament. As noted above τέρας is linked with σημεῖον in Acts but is only used to describe the miraculous twice in the Gospels.

θαῦμα only occurs twice; in 2 Cor. 11.14 and Rev. 17.6 in some readings. θαυμάσιος only occurs in Mt. 21.15 (translating  $\pi\acute{\iota}\eta\lambda\epsilon\theta\acute{\iota}\varsigma$  and  $\chi\lambda\epsilon\theta\acute{\iota}\varsigma$  in the LXX.) θαυμαστός occurs at Mt 21.42, Mk 12.11, 1 Pet. 2.9, and Rev. 15.2.

μεγαλουργία is a derivative of ἔργον but is treated separately as it does not occur in the New Testament but it, or a word derived from it, is used in the Greek Fathers.

It is worth noting that δύναμις, σημεῖον and ἔργον do not have as their principal meanings in Patristic literature any miraculous reference.

### δύναμις

This word has eight basic meanings :-

- a) power generally
  - Elias Philosophus - Fragments ap. Doct. Patr. 33 ed. Diekamp. Munster 1907 p. 256. 18. 6<sup>th</sup> c.
- b) physical power or capacity - Or. dial. 22. p. 164. 15. ob. c. 154
- c) property or quality of a thing - Herm. vis. 3. 8. 6, 7. p. 297. 2<sup>nd</sup> c.
- d) efficacy
  - Ammonas ep. 1. p. 434. 1. 4<sup>th</sup> c.
- e) potentiality
  - Or. Jo. 2. 24. PG 14. 157 A ob. c. 254
- f) might and power - This is used very widely to refer to the power of God in its various manifestations in creation and providence, in the ministry of Jesus and the Church e.g. in preaching and in the sacraments, in the work of the Holy Spirit and in spiritual power. This power is manifested, for example, in the mighty works which Moses did or which accompanied the preaching of the apostles. - Just. 1 Apol. 39. 3. PG 6. 388B dial. 11. 4. 6. 500A, dial. 79. 4. PG 6. 664A

It is used with a similiar meaning by other early writers e.g.

- Clem. str. 2. 2, 11 etc PG 8. 948C
- Or. Cels. 4. 6 PG 11. 1036C

g) It is used to refer to God as the source of all power -

The Gospel of Peter 5 ( 18 ) -

δύναμις μου

h) An act of power or mighty work and therefore a miracle e.g.

the mighty works of Simon Magus,

- Just.1Apol. 26.2 PG 6.368A

of Jesus, - " dial.11.4 PG 6.500A

or wrought in his name,

- " " 35.8 PG 6.553A

of Joshua, - " " 115.4 PG 6.741C

and generally in the Old Testament.

- " " 132.1 PG 6.781C

The miracles of Jesus recollected by Polycarp,

- Iren.epistula ad Florinum ap.Eus.H.E.

5.20.6 PG 20.485B

The miracles of Jesus manifested before his baptism.

- Hipp. haer.7.33 PG 16.3342A

Miracles performed by the apostles and continued in the Church,

- Or. Cels.1.46 PG 11.744D

- " Jo. 6.29 PG 252C

- Vit.Pach. φ 17 p.11.12

Halkin. Sancti Pachomii vitae  
Graecae in Subsidia Hagiograph-  
ica 19.Brussels 1932

σημείον

The uses of σημείον are more varied than the uses of δύναμις

which kept close to the basic meaning of power. The following

are the principal uses in Patristic literature.

a) A mark or hall - mark

- Clem.str.8.6 PG 9.585C

- Cyr.Ps 36.22 PG 69.940B

b) A measure of distance or of position

- Socr.h.e. 8.6.23 PG 67.680A

c) A term in mathematics

- Clem.str.6.11 PG 9.312B

- d) A standard or flag - Chrys. hom.3.1 in 1 Tim. G 11.562D  
Montfaucon. Joannis Chrysostomi opera omnia 2nd ed
- e) A sign i) indicating the presence of something else Paris 1834 - 39.  
- Clem. ecl.5 PG 9.700D
- ii) or a letter of the alphabet,  
- Mac. Aeg. hom.15.42 PG 34.604C
- iii) a symbol, - Or. Jo. 1.26 PG 14.72A
- iv) a wonder or portent.  
- hom. Clem. 2.34
- f) i) A miracle especially as distinct from  $\tau\epsilon\rho\alpha\varsigma$  in that it appeals to the intelligence. There are various ways in which  $\sigma\eta\mu\epsilon\iota\omicron\nu$  is distinguished from  $\tau\epsilon\rho\alpha\varsigma$  and the confusion referred to above ( see page ) becomes obvious quite early in the discussion e.g. Origen says that  $\sigma\eta\mu\epsilon\iota\omicron\nu$  does not of itself denote anything extraordinary and must also be  $\tau\epsilon\rho\alpha\varsigma$  to evoke faith. - Jo. 13.64 PG 14.521 B & C
- ii) The relationship of  $\sigma\eta\mu\epsilon\iota\omicron\nu$  to  $\tau\epsilon\rho\alpha\varsigma$  or  $\theta\alpha\upsilon\mu\alpha$  is sometimes explained in this way;  $\sigma\eta\mu\epsilon\iota\omicron\nu$  is an event which is not outside the ordinary course of nature although it may be an act of God. - Didym. Ac.9.33 PG 39. 1673B 8b.348  
 $\tau\epsilon\rho\alpha\varsigma$  and  $\theta\alpha\upsilon\mu\alpha$  refer to events which are quite outside the ordinary course of nature. - Ammon. Jo. 4.48 PG 85.1428C, Thdot. Anc. hom. 2.4 PG 77.1373C & D.  
( See the discussion p. 219 above.)
- iii)  $\sigma\eta\mu\epsilon\iota\omicron\nu$  is also used to describe an event outside the ordinary course of nature and experience and is therefore the same as  $\tau\epsilon\rho\alpha\varsigma$  and  $\theta\alpha\upsilon\mu\alpha$  .  
- + Bas. Is. 201 PG 30.464B  
- Proc. G. Gen. 9.13 PG 87.300C  
- Or. hom. 29 in Lc.
- iv)  $\sigma\eta\mu\epsilon\iota\omicron\nu$  is also used to describe an event which is perceived by the senses but the inner meaning of which is not obvious.  
- + Bas. Is. 198 PG 30.460B

v) σημεῖον also refers to miracles of the Old Testament,

- Clem.prot.1. PG 8.64C

vi) and of Jesus,

- Or.Jo.28.12 PG 14.705B

- Ath.inc.16.4. PG 25.124C

vii) and of the apostles,

- Chrys.hom.1.4 in Ac. G 9.7A

viii) and in the Church.

- Clem.exc.Thdt. 24. PG 9.672A

- Ath.vit.Anton.57 PG 26.925B

g) The purpose of σημεῖον was

i) to lead men to salvation, - Clem.str.5.3 PG 9.244C

ii) to manifest the divinity of Christ,

- Mel.fr6 PG 5.1221A

- Anast.hod.14 PG 89.249B

iii) to induce belief in unbelievers in the apostolic age and

therefore not necessary for believers at the time that

he was preaching.

- Chrys.hom.12.3 in Mt. G 7.163D

- " " 24.1 " Jo. G 1.138B

h) σημεῖον can also be the work of a magician.

- Chrys.hom.3.7 in Heb. G 12.32

γόντες σημεῖα ποιοῦσι ἄλλ' οὐ τοιαῦτα ποιοῦσι σημεῖα

Other words derived from σημεῖον are;

σημειοποιῖα which means working of miracles,

- Anast.hod.14 PG 89.249C

σημειουργός, σημειοφόρος both of which mean a miracle worker. \*

- Hymn.AS 1 p 610. maas.

- ++Ath.doct.Ant.89 PG 28.653A

- ++Tit.Bost.palm 2 PG 18.1256D

- Apophth.Patr. PG 65.160A

- Gr.Mag.dial.1.3 PL 77.166A

See also θεοσημεῖα and θεοσημεῖον .

i) σημεῖον is also used to describe celibacy which is

understood to be a sign,

- Ath. ep.49.7. PG 25.532B

and is also used to describe the serpent erected by Moses.

- Just.dial.94 Otto Jena 1876 - 77

p.342

## τέρας

The basic meaning of τέρας is an event that is intrinsically wonder - producing. Its use in the New Testament has been examined above. τέρας has no meaning which refers to anything which is not intrinsically wonder - producing. It is used widely by the Fathers from the 2nd century onwards. For Origen's understanding of the relationship of τέρας to συμπίπτειν see the section on συμπίπτειν above.

a) i) τέρας is used to refer to the wonderful works of God generally;

- Or. princ. 3.1.10, 3.1.17 PG 11.265B & 285B

- + Chrys. pan. Bab. 2.23 G 2.575E

ii) the miracles of God in the Old Testament;

- Or. Cels. 2.48 & 3.2 PG 11.872A & 921C

- " princ. 3.1.11 PG 11.268A

- Chrys. hom. 14.3 in Mt. G 7.181B

iii) the miracles of Jesus; - Or. Cels. 2.49 PG 11.873A

- " Jo. 13.52, 13.64, 20.30 PG 14.496A, 521C & 644B

iv) the miracles of the apostles;

- Or. princ. 4.1.5 PG 11.352A

- Chrys. sac. 2.5 G 1.377D

v) the miracles of martyrs;

- Soph. H. mir. Cyr. et Jo. 29 PG 87.3509C

- Chrys. hom. 29.2. in Rom. G 9.732A

b) They are the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church.

- Thdr. Heracl. ap. cat. Jo. Cramer Oxford 1841 p. 297.28

- ++ Soph. H. liturg. 2 PG 87.3984A

- Chrys. sac. 4.3 & 7 G 1.412B

c) The wonders can be deceptive and τέρας is used in the Fathers

as it is in the New Testament to describe false miracles and

magic tricks.

- Or. Cels. 2.49 & 77 PG 11.872C & 917C

It is noteworthy that δυνάμεις and συμπίπτειν are only rarely

used to describe false miracles or magic. Just. 1 apol. 26 Otto p. 78

(δυνάμεις ποιήσας μαγικάς) and Chrys. hom. 3.7 in Heb.



referred to above' are the only two examples that I could find.

d) The words derived from  $\tau\epsilon\rho\alpha\varsigma$  add little to the understanding that we have examined since they all refer to the wonderful nature of the events they are used to describe. Only those uses which add to the understanding of the miraculous will be referred to here.

i)  $\tau\epsilon\rho\alpha\sigma\tau\iota\kappa\acute{o}\varsigma$  is used to describe the conversion of S. Paul. - Or. Jo. 13.61 PG 14.521B cf. Cels. 1.2. and p. 211 above

ii) The remaining words i.e.

$\tau\epsilon\rho\alpha\sigma\tau\iota\kappa\acute{o}\varsigma$   
 $\tau\epsilon\rho\alpha\tau\epsilon\iota\acute{\alpha}$   
 $\tau\epsilon\rho\alpha\tau\omicron\upsilon\rho\gamma\eta\mu\alpha$   
 $\tau\epsilon\rho\alpha\tau\omicron\upsilon\rho\iota\acute{\alpha}$   
 $\tau\epsilon\rho\alpha\tau\omicron\upsilon\rho\gamma\acute{o}\varsigma$   
 $\tau\epsilon\rho\alpha\tau\omicron\tau\omicron\iota\epsilon\omega$   
 $\tau\epsilon\rho\alpha\tau\omicron\upsilon\rho\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\omega$

are used to refer to the working of miracles, the workers of miracles and to miracles themselves. They refer to the work of Christ and the apostles and also to false miracles and to the work of magicians. They are also used to refer to fables and the invention of fabulous stories.  $\tau\epsilon\rho\alpha\tau\epsilon\iota\acute{\alpha}$  is used to

refer to a fabulous nonsense, - Gr. Naz. or. 18.5 PG 35.989D  
and deceitful miracles. - Ep. ad Diognetum 8.4. Loeb  
Classical Library. vol. 2. p. 366.

),

$\epsilon\rho\gamma\omicron\nu$

The principal meaning of  $\epsilon\rho\gamma\omicron\nu$  is work and it refers mostly to the work of man without any wonder - producing or miraculous reference. It is used to describe the works of the devil from which Christians must flee, - Barn. 4.1 Bihlmeyer p. 10  
and works which are the results of corrupt desires,  
- 1 Clem. 28.1 PG 1.201

and the works of the devil against which Christians will prevail.

- Herm. mand. 12.6.4 Lightfoot p. 318

There are similar references in later works e.g.

1. p. 277.

- Ath.Ar.2.55 PG 26.261D
- Cyr.H.catech.19.5 PG 33.1065

It is used of the work of God in creation.

- 1 Clem.33.2 PG 1.201
- Clem.paed. PG 8.281B
- Ath.Ar.2.51 PG 26.256B
- Cyr.Jo.2.6 PG 4221C

It refers to the miracles of Christ called magic by his critics,

- Just.dial.69.6 PG 6.640A

and which no one else could do.

- Mel.pass.57 C.Bonner StD 12 (1940) p.9.34
- Or.Jo.10.12 PG 14.328A

It also refers to the works of Jesus attributed to Beelzebul.

- Ath.Ar.3.55 PG 26.440A

It is used to refer to the miracle of the loaves and fishes,

- Chrys.hom.45.2 in Jo. G 8.264A

and to the works of the Father done in the Son,

- Ath.inc.et c.Ar.14 PG 26.1008C

and the works of the Father done in the Son which show that the Son is consubstantial with the Father.

- Chrys.hom.61.2 in Jo. G 8.364C

ἔργον is used throughout the period from Justin onwards to refer to miracles. There are many subsidiary meanings related to miracles. ἔργον is also used in reference to the reality of the Word.

- Thdt.Qu.11 in Gen. Schultze and Noesselt, Halle 1769 - 74. 1.14 ὁ λόγος ἔργον ἐγένετο,

It is also used by the Fathers to mean the result of a course of action, a valid action, a building and a philosophical maxim.

θαῦμα

θαῦμα and its many derivatives are widely used in the Fathers to refer to the miraculous although, as we have seen, θαῦμα and its derivatives occur only rarely in the New Testament and then never to refer to a miracle of Jesus or in the Church. The basic meaning of θαῦμα is a wonder and it is used to refer to the works of God in general i.e. his work of creation, redemption

- and his dealings with men; - Clem.str.2.2 PG 8.936A  
 - " prot.11 PG 8.228C  
 - " paed.1.6 PG 8.300B  
 - Hipp.haer.5.8 PG 16.3143C

The most extensive use of *Θεῶν* is to refer to miracles in general;

- M.Polyc. Bihlmeyer p 120
- Or.fr.61 in Jo. GCS p.533.14
- Thdr.Heracl. Is.1.2. PG 18.1309B
- Greg.Naz.or.18.13 PG 35.1001Dff
- Chrys.hom.2.3 in 1 Tim. G 11.560C

and to events above the natural order.

- Greg.Nyss.or.catech.24 PG 45.64C

The effect of miracles is faith and hope,

- Cyr.hom.pash.18.4 PG 77.401

which, unlike the effect of human marvels, is permanent.

- Isid.Pel.epp.1.397 PG 78.405A

It can also refer to the miracles of the Old Testament,

- Greg.Naz.or.13.1. PG 35.853A
- Chrys.hom.14.3 in Mt. G 7.181B

and the Virgin Birth,

- Ath.inc.20.4 PG 25.132B
- " " 33.3 PG 25.153A

and the miracles of Christ - Eus.h.e.1.2.23 PG 20.65B

- wrought by his divinity, - Or.fr.94 in Jo. GCS p.558.3
- Gr.Nyss.or.catech.11 PG 45.44B  
 or.catech.34. PG 45.85 D

which fail to impress Pilate and the Jews.

- Chrys.hom.86.2 in Mt. G 7.814A

It refers to the miracles of the saints

- Eus.h.e.6.9.1. PG 20.537C
- Ath.v.Anton.83 PG 26.960C

and to those wrought by God in his saints

- Ath.v.Anton.58. PG 26.982B

and in the apostles

- Chrys.hom.4.2 in Eph. G 11.54E

and prophets - Greg.Nyss.v.Gr.Th. PG 46.932D  
 and of Christians in general.- Chrys.hom.9.3 in Hebr. G 12.96B  
 Miracles worked by images of Jesus and the Blessed Virgin.  
 - Evagr.h.e.5.18 PG 86.2828C  
 - Thdr.Stud.antirr.2.19 PG 99.365D

Chrysostom, when referring in hom.35.3 in Jo. - G 8.206A, to  
 his suggestion that Christians should not expect miracles, uses  
 θαύμα ; he makes the same point in de compunct.1.8 - G 1.137A.  
 The same point is made by Thdot.Anc.in hom.2.4. - PG 77.1373B.

θαύμα is also used to refer to wonders worked by the devil

and the wicked - Eus.h.e. 7.17 PG 20.680A  
 - Is.Pel.epp.1.145 PG78.28C  
 and by heretics. - Leont.H.monoph. PG 86.1896Cf

Other words deriving from θαύμα are θαύματα τοῦ πνεύματος and θαύματα τοῦ πύλου.

θαύματα τοῦ πνεύματος is used to describe the miracles of God  
 in general, - Cyr.H. ep.Const. 3 & 6 PG 33.1168B  
 & 1172B

in the Old Testament - Cyr.Is.4.2 Aubert Cyrilli Opera  
 Paris 1638 2.

and the miracles of Christ - Chrys.hom.8.9. in Eph. G 11.68A  
 -++ Chrys.hom.9 G 13.235D

and of Elijah and Elisha. - Ast.Am.hom.10 PG 40.328B

θαύματα τοῦ πύλου means the working of miracles and is used

in reference to God, - ++ Ath.Apoll.2.18 PG 26.1164C  
 of Christ - Ammon.Ac.16.29 PG 85.1560C  
 - Eus.d.e.1.1 PG 22.17A  
 - ++ Titus Bost.palm.1 PG 18.1265B  
 - Chrys.hom.53.2 in Mt. G 7.540B

and of Christians. - A.Jo.16 LB p.160.20  
 - Thdt.Rom.1.4 Schultze and Noesselt  
 Halle 1769 -74 3.15

It is also used to refer to the blessed in heaven.

- Mac.Aeg.hom.17.4 PG 34.625C

It is used to refer to the wonders of God in nature,

- Eus.l.C.1 PG 20.1321B
- Epiph.haer.64.66 PG 41.1185A

and to the working of miracles by God.

- Ammon.Ac.27.24 PG 85.1601A
- Diod.Ps.82.18 PG 33.1616B
- Epiph.haer.51.16 PG 41.920C
- Chrys.hom.77.2 in Jo. G 8.453E

It is also used with σημείον eg. ἡ τῶν σημείων θαυματουργία

- Chrys. hom.62.1 in Mt. G7.619C

Θαυματουργία can also mean the working of miracles,

by God,

- Eus.he.e 3.24 PG 20.264C
- A.Thadd.5. LB 1 p.275.18n

and also of Christ as a worker of miracles.

- Gr.Naz.carm.1.2.24 PG 37.813A
- Chrys.hom 67.1 in M. G 7.662B

It is also used by Gregory of Nyssa to refer to Gregory Thaumaturgus in his Life - PG 46.893A.

It is also used to refer to an accusation that Christ worked like a magician.

- Eus.d.e.3.5. PG 22.221D

Θεσημεία and Θεσημείον, two words derived from σημείον are used to refer to miracles. Θεσημεία refers to miracles generally, eg. the angels at the birth of Christ,

- Or.Cels.1.60 PG 11.769C

and the eclipse at the Crucifixion,

- Or.Cels.2.35 & 36 PG 11.857A & B

and in the Old Testament,

- Eus.h.e.10 4.5 PG 20.849B
- Dion.Ar.ep.7 PG 3.1081A

and to Constantine's vision, - Eus.v.C.1.28 PG 20.944B

divine healing,

- Thdt.qu.10 in Ex. Schultze & Noesselt Halle 1769 - 74 p.1.124

and to Christ's miracles - Epiph.anc.27 PG 43.65C  
- Cyr.Chr.un. Pusey Cyrilli de recta  
fide etc. Oxford 1877 5.748D

which are signs of his divinity

- Cyr.Juln.7. Aubert Cyrilli Opera  
Paris 1638 6.2.248B
- Cyr.Jo.3 Pusey 4.273C

worked by the power of the Holy Spirit.

- Cyr.Lc.4.14 PG 72.536A

It is also used to refer to the miracles of Moses,

- Cyr.Rom.11.30 PG 74.852A

and of the apostles.

- " .Nah.17 Aubert 3.496A

θεσημειον is used to refer to miracles generally, principally in Epiphanius Constantiensis,

- Ammon.Jo.1.15 PG 85.1400B
- Epiph.haer.30.10 PG 41.421B

performed by Christ,  
by apostles,

- " " 51.21 PG 41.925B
- " " 42.11 PG 41.768A

and in the Old Testament.

- " " " " PG 41.757C

### παράδοξος

The basic meaning of παράδοξος is something varying from common experience or belief. A wrong belief is therefore described by παράδοξος.

as is something which is beyond reason,

- Eus.fr.61 PG 18.692 B

or unexpected,

- Just.dial.38.2 PG 6.557A & B

- Or.Cels.1.32 PG 11.721A

- Diog.5.4. PG 2.1168

- Or.Jo.13.64 PG 14.521B

or astounding,

- C.Alex.ep.ap.Ath.sec.10 PG 25.265C

- Chrys.hom.26.39 in Mt. G 3.19D

or miraculous.

- Or.Cels.4.80 PG 11.1152D

In the neuter it is used as a noun to describe events which have

a miraculous character,

- Clem.fr 29. GCS 3 p.217.14

- Hipp.haer.4.36 PG 16.3102

and events which are miracles of Christ,

- Or.Cels.8.9 PG 11.1532A

- Bas.hex.8.5 PG 29.177B

and of the apostles.

- Eus.d.e.3 arg. PG 22.164

σημείον is qualified by παράδοξος and παραδοξοσημεῖα  
is a miraculous sign.

- cat.Apoc.16.3 Cramer Oxford 1840  
p.411.19

παραδοξοποιᾶ is used to refer to wonder - working

at the Exodus

- Cyr.Is4.5 Aubert 2.711D

and by pagan wonder - workers.

- Eus.p.e.4.3 PG 21.244C

It is also used of Moses,

- " d.e.3.2 PG 22.169C

of Christ,

- Or.fr.53 in Jo. GCS 4 p.527.12

and of the followers of Christ,

- Eus.h.e.2.1.11 PG 20.137B

of magicians

- " Hierocl. PG 22.829B

whose methods are contrasted with the methods of Christ.

- Eus.d.e.3.6 PG 22.233D

It is also used to refer to the mystery of the Crucifixion.

- Epiph.haer.69.60 PG 42.304B

The adjective παραδοξοποιός, meaning wonder - working is  
used in reference to God,

-++ Pall.h.mon.8.29 PG 34.1140D

- Eus.l.C.11 PG 20.1384B

- " Is.7.12 & 11.11 PG 24.133B  
& 176B

- Ath.gent.44 PG 25.88C

- Chrys.hom.9.1 in Mt G 7.131A

and to the power of Christ,

- Eus.d.e.3.7 PG 22.244A

- " h.e.1.13.1 PG 20.120B

transmitted to his followers,-

- " 3.24.3 PG 20.264B

and used as a noun to refer to the description given of Christ by some.

- Cyr.Jo.34 Pusey 4.294E

It also refers to a conjuror.- Nil.Magn.65 PG 79.1057B

The verb παραβοξοποιέω is used to refer to the working of miracles by God,

- Epiph.haer.68.6 PG 42.1936
- Chrys.exp.in ps.135.13 G 5.400A

by Christ,

- Eus.d.e.4.11 & 9.16 PG 22.281C & 708A
- Chrys.hom.29.1 & 68.2 in Mt. G 7.342C & 672E

and the work of magicians. - Bas.Sel.v.Thecl.1 PG 85.540C

Το μεγαλουργημα a derivative of μέγας ἔργον means a great achievement and so a miracle by God,

- Nect.Theodr.4 PG 39.1825A
- Cyr.Is.4.5 & Jo.4.2 Aubert 2.711C & 4.360A

by Christ,

- Or.Ps 77.4 = Ath.exp.Ps.77.4 PG 27.352A
- Cyr.Arcad. PG 76.1201

and by apostles.

- Alex.Sal.Barn.16 Acta Sanctorum Jun.11 p.441A

ἡ μεγαλουργία is a great work and when of God a miracle,

- Eus.Ps.134.15 PG 24.32C
- Cyr.Os.5 Aubert 3.24C
- " Ps.95.2 PG 69.1244B

of which the Incarnation is one;

- Eus.d.e. PG 22.218 A

It is also used of Christ's miracles.

- Cyr.Lc.4.31 PG 72.545B

It can also mean miracle working, by God,

- Gr.Naz.or.38.11 PG 36.321C

by Christ,

- Cyr.Lc.5.2 PG 72.553B

by the Holy Spirit,

- Thdt.h.rel.proem. Schultze & Noesselt Halle 1769 - 74 3.1106



ἡ χάρις

This word means grace and is widely used in the Fathers. Insofar as every part of the Christian life is a work of grace then all the miracles of Jesus and the miracles of the Church are works of grace. As we have seen above ( p.190f) Clement of Rome and Justin refer to charisms and gifts of grace in the Church, such as prophecy, as being the same sort of gift as healing and therefore, as works of grace, miraculous. We have also observed the tendency to regard any work of grace in the Church as equivalent to, or even greater in significance than, the gifts of grace which cause wonder and which are generally called miracles. We have seen, for example, how celibacy is called a sign - σημεῖον by Athanasius. Grace enables those to whom it is given to go beyond their natural gifts. This going beyond nature does not in this case refer to any breach of the natural order but the

ability to live beyond the natural moral level; eg. 1 Clement 55.3.

PG 1.320 A, πολλαὶ γυναῖκες ἐνδυναμώθεισαι διὰ τῆς χάριτος τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐπετελέσαντο πολλὰ ἀνδρείᾳ.

Origen de oratione I. PG 11.416 A

τὰ διὰ τὸ εἶναι μέγιστα καὶ ὑπὲρ ἄνθρωπον τυγχάνειν... ἀδύνατα τῷ λογικῷ καὶ θνητῷ γένει καταλαβεῖν ἐν πολλῇ... ἐκ χειρὸς ἀπὸ Θεοῦ εἰς ἄνθρώπους χάριτι Θεοῦ διὰ τοῦ τῆς... χάριτος ὑπερέτου... Χριστοῦ καὶ τοῦ συνεργοῦ πνεύματος βουλῇσι Θεοῦ δυνατὰ γίνεσθαι.

The uses of χάρις and χάρισμα to refer specifically to miracles are relatively few. χάρις is used to refer to prophecy as a gift of grace in the following passages;

- ++ Diogn.11.6 PG 2.1168
- Or.Jo.1.30 PG 14.77D
- Ath.ep.Drac.5 PG 25.529A
- Greg.Naz.Or.2.109 PG 35.508B

- Chrys.David 2.1 G 4.761A
- Cyr.Ps.36.25 PG69.941A

and to miracles in the following eg.;

- Or.Cels.2.50 PG 11.876C
- Ath.Ar.3.2 PG 26.325C
- Chrys.hom.46.3 in Mt. G 7.485C

$\chi\alpha\rho\iota\sigma\mu\alpha$  is used in reference to the charismatic gift of prophecy,

- Just.dial.82.1 PG 6.669B
- Or.fr.in Lam.116 PG 13.660B & C
- Meth.Symp.10.2 PG 18.196A
- Eus.h.e.3.37.1 PG 20.292D

to miracles,

- Const.App.8.1.1 & 2,8.26.2  
Funk 1 p.3ff

and to private revelations. - Ign.Polyc.2.2 PG 5.718

- Ath.v.Anton.66 & 67 PG 26.936C & 940A

We may draw a few tentative conclusions from this examination of the words used by the Greek Fathers to refer to the miraculous.

a) A much wider range of words is used in patristic literature to refer to the miraculous than is used in the New Testament and the words used in the New Testament to refer to the miraculous i.e.  $\delta\upsilon\lambda\alpha\mu\iota\varsigma$ ,  $\sigma\eta\mu\epsilon\iota\omicron\nu$  and  $\acute{\epsilon}\rho\gamma\omicron\nu$  are 1) not used as widely as the other words to refer to miracles and 2) that they are used principally in a non - miraculous sense. The use of  $\tau\acute{\epsilon}\rho\alpha\varsigma$  in the Acts of the Apostles in conjunction with  $\sigma\eta\mu\epsilon\iota\omicron\nu$  to refer to miracles is not an exception of any significance. In the Gospels  $\tau\acute{\epsilon}\rho\alpha\varsigma$  always refers to the works of anti - Christs and is always used in conjunction with  $\sigma\eta\mu\epsilon\iota\omicron\nu$  in the Acts of the Apostles. ( See p. 73f above)

It is widely used in the Greek Fathers to refer to the miracles of God, Christ and the Church.

b) The largest number of words listed in Lampe as being used by the Greek Fathers to refer to the miraculous have this meaning as their principal or only meaning.

c) Little can be deduced about the development of the usage of the various words examined.  $\delta\acute{\upsilon}\nu\alpha\mu\iota\varsigma$ ,  $\tau\eta\mu\acute{\iota}\sigma\iota\varsigma$ ,  $\epsilon\gamma\gamma\acute{\omicron}\nu$  were used by the earliest fathers and the words with an exclusively wonderful occur a little later in the early part of the 3rd Century. In the absence of a complete concordance of patristic literature no firmer conclusion is possible. The greater use of the New Testament words among the earliest Fathers is perhaps not surprising. Their vocabulary would have been more dependant on the text of the New Testament. It would be too much to say that the wonder-producing element became the significant part of the understanding of the miraculous in the later part of the period under examination. We have seen that Augustine had a far more profound understanding than this of the miraculous. We see this reflected also in constant emphasis, particularly in Chrysostom, on the relative unimportance of spectacular miracles and the miraculous nature of certain moral qualities. It may be correct to conclude that the understanding of the miraculous was moving in the direction of a greater concentration on the miraculous as wonder-producing and certainly this understanding comes to prominence in the Middle Ages. The more profound understanding which we find in Augustine is of no great importance in the Middle Ages. The use of the New Testament word  $\tau\eta\mu\acute{\iota}\sigma\iota\varsigma$  by Chrysostom to refer to the miracles of magicians may indicate the confusion of understanding that existed.

The problem of the essential nature of a miracle which becomes a concern as early as Origen, that is the balance between its capacity to reveal the action of God and its capacity to cause wonder, persists but there is no satisfactory solution of it. Augustine's treatment of the problem by differentiating between different sorts of miracles provides a partial solution but it does not adequately solve the basic problem.

## Appendix B

### A. study of the Latin words used to refer to the miraculous.

In the absence of a concordance of the Latin Fathers it has been impossible to examine the words used by the Latin Fathers as extensively as the Greek. The words used to describe the miraculous in the principal passages in the Latin Fathers which deal with miracles have been examined with a reference to the secular meaning of the words. The words studied are ;

**Virtus**

signum

miraculum

portentum

prodigium

opus

potestas.

In the Vulgate New Testament *δύναμις* is consistently translated as *virtus*, *σημεῖον* as *signum*, *τέρας* as *prodigium* and *portentum* ( the latter only in Mk 13.22 and Heb.2.4 ) and *ἔργον* is always translated as *opus*. *θαυμάσιος* which only occurs at Mt21,25 is translated as *mirabile*. *Miraculum*, the most widely used word in the Fathers to refer to the miraculous, occurs occasionally in the Vulgate Old Testament eg. 1 Kings 14.15 and Jeremiah 23.32. It is never used in the Vulgate New Testament.

Virtus<sup>1</sup> ( translates *δύναμις* in the Vulgate New Testament)

The basic meaning of *virtus* is strength, vigour or power and so also moral strength, vigour and power. As a military virtue it is synonymous with *fortitudo*. It translates some 35 Hebrew words in the Vulgate Old Testament. It is used in the secular sense in the Fathers eg. Paul.Nola.carm.10.30

It is used to describe

divine power,

- Lact.div.inst.4.13 PL 6.483A  
divina virtute

the miraculous powers of Jesus, i.e. not a miracle but the power to perform a miracle. - Arn.adv.gent.2.11 PL 5.826A

potentissimasque virtutes

- Arn.adv.gent.2.12 PL 5.828A

virtutes sub oculis positas

- Cass.de.inc.c.Nest.libri vii

lib.vi.1 PL 50.136 divinae virtutis

It also refers to the powers of God exercised by Jesus which are evidence of his divinity. - Hil.Poit.de tr.7.26 PL 10.222A

It is also used to refer to miracles,

- Cass.coll.15.6 PL 49.1003A

et virtutes maximas operantur

to powers which with grace are manifested as miracles in Abba

Macarius

- Cass.coll.15.3. PL 49.999B

and to mighty works of God which are not miracles.

- Cass.coll.15.7. PL 49.1004A

1. See p.303 n.1 below

## Signum<sup>1</sup>

The basic meaning of signum is a sign or distinguishing mark and it translates *σημεῖον* in the Vulgate New Testament. It can refer to signs which indicate the presence of a miracle which are not miracles in the usual sense,

- Amb.ep.22.2 PL 16.1063A inveni  
signa convenientia

the signs by which the angels draw us to worship the one God,

- Aug.de civ.dei.10.16 PL 41.294

or even to wonders worked by a man, who is under the captivity of sin, who works through demons.- Cass.coll.15.1 PL 49.992

propter admirationem signorum

It is also used to refer to signs which we must not ask for because to do so is to put God to the test,

- Aug.conf.10.35 PL 32.802 hinc  
etiam in ipsa religione Deus  
temptatur cum signa et prodigia

to the miracles of the apostles,

- Cass.coll.15.6 PL 49.1003A

and to miracles worked by saints in the Church,

- Jer.v.Hil. PL 23.34D & 42A

the grace of signs i.e. miracles seen in the lives of holy men,

- Cass.coll.15.1 PL 49.989  
signorum gratia

and the miracles of God who is the author of all miracles and mighty works.

- Cass.coll.15.7 PL 49.1004A  
signorum omnium atque virtutem

## Miraculum

This word is the most widely used in the Latin Fathers to refer to the miraculous and its meaning is an event which is intrinsically wonderful and is used in the Latin Fathers to refer to any wonderful event, even to strange behaviour.

- Arn.adv.gent.5.25 PL 5.1134A

It is also used to refer to false miracles in the sense of tricks.

- Tert.apol.23 PL 1.470 (411) nova  
simulta miracula circulatoriis  
praestigiis ludunt. See also  
- Tert.apol.22 PL 1.468 (409).

Augustine provides the most comprehensive definition as we have seen above.

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1. See p.303 n.1.  
below.

- Aug.de util.cred.34 PL 42.90

Miraculum voco quidquid arduum aut  
insolitum supra spem vel facultatem  
mirantis apparet.

In the passage immediately preceding this he uses miraculum to  
describe those events to which authority can appeal in order to  
convince a man of the truth of Christian claims.

It is used to describe the wonderful works of false divinities  
which are not conjuring tricks,

- Lact.div.inst.7.17 PL 6.794A

- Tert.apol.21 PL1.463(404) et miraculis  
et oraculis fidem divinitatis operatur

and to the wonderful works of pagan deities,

disgraceful miracles within - Aug. de civ.dei 4.27. PL 41.134  
the poetic tradition nihil denique posse confingi  
miraculorum atque vitiorum

or caused by demons

- Aug. de civ. dei 10.16. PL 41.294  
miraculorum deorum gentilium

and to the wonderful works of thaumaturges and magicians.

- Aug.de civ.dei. 8.16 PL 41.241  
miracula magorum

It is also used by Augustine to refer to theatrical spectacles.

- Aug.de tr.4.11. PL 42.897

- Aug.conf.10.35. PL 32.302

ex hoc morbo cupiditas in speculis  
exhibentur quaeque miracula

It is also used to refer to the miracles of Jesus,

- Lact.ep.div.inst.45 PL 6.1052A cf.

div.inst.4.13 PL 6.485B

- Aug.de util.cred. 32 PL 42.88

the miracle of the birth of Jesus,

- Cass.de inc.c.Nest.libri vii  
lib.1. PL 50.137

and of the Church.

- Lact.div.inst.4.21 PL 6.516B

facientes paene incredibilia miracula

- Aug.de vera.rel.24.47 PL 34.142

nec miracula illa in nostra tempore  
durare permissa sunt

- Cass.coll.15.3 PL49.999B a miracle  
of Abba Nesteros in raising a man  
long dead.

- Hil.Poit.de tr.11.3. PL 10.401B

Miracles at the tombs of the martyrs.

It is also widely used to refer to moral miracles, i.e. events or acts of God which are not intrinsically wonderful but are worthy of wonder for moral reasons; miracles of virtue,

- Lact.div.inst.5.13 PL 6.592A et  
alius propter miraculum virtutis  
novus populus accedat.

the government of the world by God,

- Aug.in Jo.24.1 PL 35.1593 majus  
enim miraculum est gubernatio  
totus mundi.

and similiarly that man is a greater miracle than any miracle done by man.

- Aug.de civ.dei.10.12 PL 41.291  
nam et omni miraculo quod fit per  
hominem majus miraculum est homo.  
- Cass.coll.15.8. PL 49.1007B

It is also used to refer to the miracles of God in the Old Testament; see above.

### Portentum

Portentum means a sign, token or omen. In the Vulgate it is used twice in the New Testament in Mark 13.22 and Hebrews 2.4 and more frequently in the Old Testament eg. Deuteronomy 34.11. It is also used, in a derivative, to refer to the wonderful works of Jesus,

- Lact.div.inst.4.13 PL 6.483A  
portentifica illum opera fecisse

and miracles generally.

- Aug.de civ.dei.21.8 PL 41.721  
portentum fit non contra naturam  
sed contra quam est nota natura

### Prodigium

Prodigium means a sign, token, omen or prodigy, usually in a bad sense. It is used in the Vulgate Old Testament on several occasions eg. Ps 134.9 - signa et prodigia. In the New Testament it occurs once at Mt 24.24 in reference to the work of false Christs - signa magna et prodigia. It is also used to refer to the works of great men by which they show their majesty.

- Lact.div.inst.2.8. PL 6.288B

It can also mean wonders.

- Aug.conf.10.35 PL 32.802 cum signa  
et prodigia

- Cass.coll.15.1. quoting Mt 24.24  
PL 49.990

### Opus

The basic meaning of opus is work and from this to good works done by grace,

- Cyp.ep.12.2 (ep.18 in some editions)  
PL 4.278 bona opera

and the divine works of Jesus,

- Arn.adv.gent.2.11 PL 5.826A  
opera illa magnifica and also  
PL 5.827A divinorum operum  
prosequitur.  
-+Cyp.de spec.9 PL 4.816C  
opera divina

### Potestas

Potestas means ability or power. In the Vulgate New Testament it is used to refer to heavenly powers eg. Eph 6.12, 1 Peter 3.22, 1 Cor.15.24. It is used to refer to the power to work miracles,

- Lact.div.inst.7.17 PL 6.793A  
potestatem mirabilia faciendi  
- Arn.adv.gent.1.1.44 PL 5.775A  
bonis potestatis munificae

the power of the name of Jesus revealed in cures effected at the tombs of martyrs and apostles,- Hil.Poit.de tr.11.3 PL 10.401B

and to acts of divine power. - Cass.de inc.c.Nest.libri vii  
lib.6.1 PL 50.136 Tanta et tam  
incomprehensibilis divinae vis  
potestatis est.

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1. Signum is used to refer to miracles in British and Irish sources from c.760 to c.1520. Virtus is also so used in the same sources from 6.c. to c.1400. Latham. Revised Medieval Latin Word - List. It can be seen therefore that these uses are not restricted to the earliest Fathers. No use of opus to refer to miracle is recorded in Latham.



## Appendix C

A glossary of the Hebrew words referred to above which are used to describe the miraculous.

בְּרִיאָה = a creative act of God,

e.g. Numbers 16.30 בְּרִיאָה = an event not heard of,

Isaiah 48. נִבְרָאוּ = new things to be revealed.

גְּדוּלָּה

= an act of the sovereign God and therefore great or mighty,

e.g. Job 5.9 גְּדוּלוֹת = the great acts of God, very similar in meaning

to גִּבּוֹר = strong and mighty acts of God, e.g. Psalm 106.2

גְּבוּרוֹת = great acts of blessing.

פִּלְאָה

= the acts of a hidden and transcendent God,

e.g. Psalm 78.12 } פִּלְאָה = wonders worked on the plains of Zoan,

Ex.15.11 } = great acts of God at the Exodus.

More commonly used to refer to the acts of the hidden and transcendent God, from

פָּלַא = to make wonderful, is נִפְלְאוּ = something extra-

ordinary, a wonderful act,

e.g. Job 9.10 וְנִפְלְאוֹת = miracles of nature,

Psalm 78.11 וְנִפְלְאוֹתָיו = miracles of history.

Most frequently used word is אוֹת = a sign, translated as σημεῖον in the LXX,

e.g. Isaiah 8.18 לְאוֹת = the children of Isaiah as signs or messages,

Deut.4.34 בְּאוֹת = miracles.

מוֹפֵת

= a) a splendid or conspicuous act and when of God a miracle ( translated by τέρας in the LXX but see below),

e.g. Exodus 4.21 כָּל-הַמּוֹפְתִים = all the miracles ( used with אוֹת in Deut.4.34)

e.g. Psalm 135.9 וּמִפְתִּים = signs and wonders ( with )  
 = b) a sign or proof, very similar to and  
 so a miracle,

e.g. Psalm 71.7 כְּמוֹפֶת = the wonderful sign of the psalmist's life.  
 = c) a portent in a good sense, almost a sign,

e.g. Isaiah 8.18 וּלְמוֹפְתִים = referring to Isaiah's children ( with )

Although מוֹפֶת is translated as τέρας in the LXX and this word in the New Testament and the Fathers has the meaning of a wonder - producing event. מוֹפֶת  
 is much nearer to אוֹת in meaning. cf. also Ez 24.27 where מוֹפֶת = a sign.

מוֹרָא = an astounding deed and so a miracle or a prodigy,  
 ( translated as τέρας in the LXX).

e.g. Deut. 26.8 דְּבִרַּת מִרְא = the terrifying events as God brought his people out  
 of Egypt.

נוֹרָא = something great and terrible, from the Niphal  
 of רָא

e.g. 2 Sam. 7.23. וּבִרְאוֹת = terrible things done by God.

Exodus 34.10 פִּי־נוֹרָא = the awesome making of the covenant.

Joel 2.11 וְנוֹרָא = the day of the Lord is very terrifying.

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 A. Thadd. Acta Thaddaei, LB 1 p.273.  
 LB = R.A.Lipsius and M.Bonnet. Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha 1 & 2.  
 Leipzig 1891 - 1903.

Alexander Salaminus ( Alex. Sal.) saec.v.

Barn. laudatio in apostolorum Barnabam, ASS Jun.11  
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Ammonas saec. iv.

ep 1 - 7 epistulae, F.Nau PO 11 (1916) p.432

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Jo. fragmenta in Jo.Pq 85.1392.

Ac. fragmenta in Ac.Pq 85.1524.

Anastasius Apocrisarius ( Anast.Ap.) ob.post 700.

hod. hodegus sive viae dux, Pq 89.36.

Apocalypse Apocryphae

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TS = M.R.James, Apocrypha Anecdota, TS. 5.1. ( 1897)

Apophthegmata

Apophth.Patr. Apophthegmata Patrum. Pq 65.72.

Aristides ( Arist.) saec. ii.

apol. apologia, Goodspeed p.3.

Athanasius Alexandrinus ( Ath.) ob. 373.

apol.sec. apologia ( secunda ) contra Arianos, Pq 25.248.

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ep.Drac. epistula ad Dracontium, Pq 25.524.

gent. contra gentes, Pq 25.4.

inc. de incarnatione, Pq 25.96.

inc.et c.Ar. de incarnatione et contra Arianos, Pq 26.984.

v.Anton. vita Antonii, Pq 26.837.

++ Apoll.1 - 2 de incarnatione contra Apollinarem, Pq 26.1093.

++ doct.Ant. doctrina ad Antiochem ducem, Pq 28.556.

Barnabae Eoistula ( Barn.) saec.ii

Barn. Bihlmeyer p.10.

Basiliius Caesariensis Cappadociae ( Bas.) ob. 379

- + Chr.generat. in Christi generationem, Pq 31.1457  
 + Is. commentarius in Is.1 - 16, Pq 30.117.  
 hex.1 - 9 homilae in hexaemeron, Pq 29.4.

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- v.Thecl. de vita ac miraculis Theclae, Pq 85.477

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 + pan. Bab.2 panegyricum in Babylam martyrem et  
 contra Julianum et gentes, Pq 50.533  
 sac.1- 6 de sacerdotio Pq 48.623  
 ++ hom.9 homilia in illud, Hic ets filius,  
 Mt 17.5, Pq 64.33 app.= to Gr.Ant.  
 bapt.2.

Clemens Alexandrinus ( Clem) ob. ante 215

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 exc Thdot. excerpta Theodoti, Pq 9.653  
 fr. 1- 74 fragmenta, GCS 3 p.195, partly in  
 9.740  
 paed. paedagogus, Pq 8.247  
 prot. protrepticus sive cohortatio ad gentes,  
 Pq 8.49  
 str. stromateis 1- 6, Pq 8.685, Pq 9.9; str.  
 7- 8, Pq 9.401

- Clemens Romanus saec.i  
 1 Clem. epistula Clementis ad Corinthios, PG 1.201
- Clementina saec. iii/iv  
 Hom. Clem. 1- 20 homiliae Clementinae, PG 2.57
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 Const.App. constitutiones apostolorum, Funk 1 p.3
- Cyrillus Alexandrinus (Cyr.) ob. 444  
 ador. de adoratione in spiritu et veritate, PG 468.133  
 Arcad. de recta fide ad Arcadium et Marinam,  
 PG 76.1201
- Chr.un. quod unus sit Christus, PG 75.1253  
 Ps. explanatio in Pss. PG 69.717  
 Is. commentarius in Is., PG 70  
 Os. - Mal. commentarius in duodecim prophetas, PG 71, 72  
 Lc. fragmenta commentarii in Lc., PG 72.476  
 Jo. commentarius in Jo., PG 73, 74  
 Rom. explanatio in Rom., PG 74.773  
 hom.pasch.1,2,4- 30 homiliae paschales, PG 77.401  
 Juln. contra Julianum, PG 76.504  
 ep. Const. epistula ad Constantium de visione crucis,  
 PG 33.1165
- Didache XII Apostolorum saec.11  
 Did. Bihlmeyer p.1
- Didymus Alexandrinus (Didym.) ob. 398  
 Ac. fragmenta in Ac. PG 39.1653
- Diodorus Tarsensis (Diod.) ob. ante 394  
 Ps. fragmenta in Pss. PG 33.1587
- Diognetum, Epistula Ad saec.ii  
 Diogn.1-12 2.1168 ( 11 & 12 not authentic)
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 ep. 1- 10 epistulae, PG 3.1065
- Doctrina Patrum saec.vii  
 Doct.Patr. doctrina patrum de incarnatione verbi,  
 F.Diekamp Munster 1907
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 anc. ancoratus, PG 43.17  
 haer. panarion sive adversus lxxx haereses,  
 41.173 - 42.882
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 d.e. demonstratio evangelica, 22.13

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 1,2 apol. apologiae, PG 6.328  
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 ++liturg. fragmentum commentarii liturgici, PG 87.3981  
 saec.xii
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ep. epistulae

Arnobius (Arn.) ob.c.330

adv.gent. adversus gentes

Note that some editions give this work the  
title - adversus nationes.

Augustine of Hippo (Aug) ob.430

de civ.dei de civitate dei

conf. confessiones

de util.cred. de utilitate credendi

de trin. de trinitate

de vera rel. de vera religione

Cassian, John (Cass.) ob.435

de inc.c.Nest.libri vii

de incarnatione Domini contra Nestorum, libri vii

coll. collationes

Cyprian of Carthage (Cyp.) ob.258

ep. epistulae

de spec. de speculatis

Hilary of Poitiers (Hil.) ob. 367

de tr. de trinitate

Jerome (Jer.) ob.420

v.Hil. vita Hilarion

Lactantius (Lact.) ob.c.320

div.inst. institutiones divinae

ep.div.inst. epitome divinarum institutionem

Paulinus of Nola (Paul.) ob.431

carm. carmina

Tertullian (Tert.) ob.c.220

apol. apologia

Abbreviations

AB - ~~Ana~~lecta Bollandiana, Brussels

AGC - W Christ and M Paranikas, Anthologia Graeca Carminum Christianorum, Leipzig 1871

ASS - Acta Sanctorum, Brussels 1643

CSCO - Corpus scriptorum christianorum orientalium, Paris 1903 onwards

CSEL - Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum, Vienna 1866 onwards

comm. - commentary

GCS - Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der Ersten Drei Jahrhunderte, Leipzig 1903

hom. - homily

JTS - The Journal of Theological Studies, Oxford

KIT - Kleine Texte, Bonn, Leipzig and Berlin

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#### Addendum

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